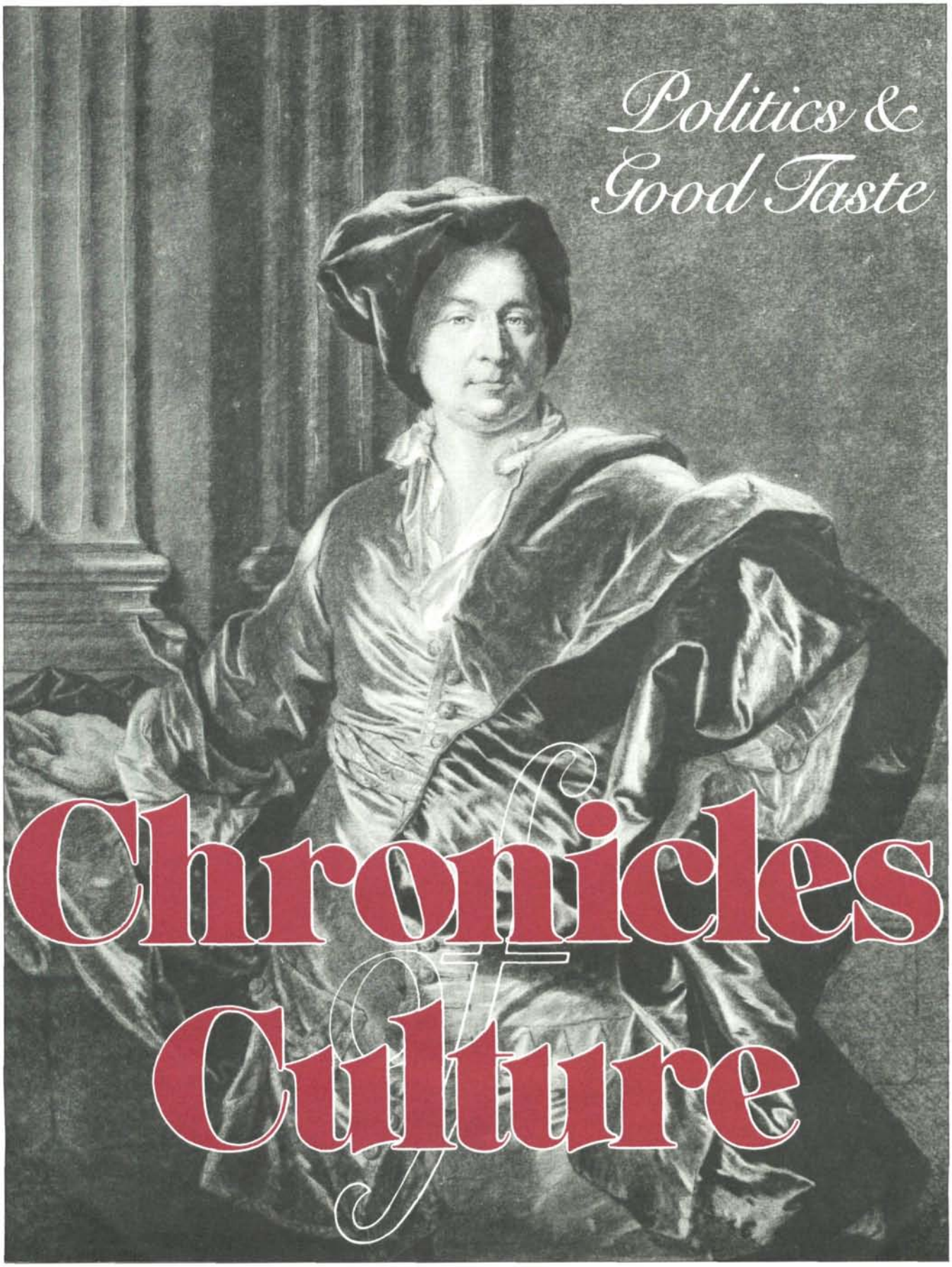

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Politics & Good Taste

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COMMENT

Politics, once considered synonymous with government, should no longer be so confused. In modern times, politics is the art of maneuvering—either openly or secretly—toward a position of power. Government, on the other hand, is the act of ruling. To recognize that moving toward power is one activity, and the use of power itself quite another, is to better understand why the power-seekers in our society (and all others) maneuver according to one set of assumptions and rule according to another. Good taste, on the other hand, is, by common usage, to reveal through graceful behavior a civilized sensibility. It is clear that in order to move successfully toward power, the ambitious person must have a keen understanding of prevailing codes of culture. He is, after all, wooing. But to assume that wooing always requires politeness is, at best, naive. There is a time in courtship for boldness, and a time in political campaigning for attack.

Last November Americans observed—in local, state, and national contests—a variety of campaigns that used every modern instrument of communication. The spectacle was not exactly heartwarming, but it was certainly an excellent portrait of our present national situation, as it exhibited both politics (the art of seeking power) and good taste (the art of catering to cultural habits and assumptions). Some observers in the media claimed—largely on the basis of the huge sums expended—that the campaign reached a new low in American politicking. That conclusion seems, to say the least, exaggerated. For years, the media watched the political organization of mass trade unions and hundreds of thousands of unpaid workers for the Democratic Party in election after election and showed not the slightest sign of dismay. What excites the ire of the media today, as it did in 1980, is the amount of *Republican Party* funds and, especially, the corporate PAC's. These, the media intone, are menaces to democracy. There has also been some indignation expressed over the use of voting records to assess candidates standing for re-election. How such objections can be reconciled with reason is remarkable: if a candidate's performance should not be cited, what should be? His opinions, of course. It is a liberal article of faith that people should be judged not on their own behavior but on their opinions of other people's behavior. Therefore, commercials attacking Senator Kennedy's character, based on a number of incidents and positions he has taken in his career, were barred from the television stations of Massachusetts on the grounds that they constituted an unjust assault. A violation, if you like, of good taste. On the other hand, it was not the television stations of California that removed Jerry Brown's commercial against San Diego's mayor Pete Wilson (a mushroom cloud was shown, somehow linking the death of children to Pete Wilson), but Mr. Brown himself, who received protests from the public. In this instance, it was Jerry Brown's camp (and not the networks) which admitted not a violation of good taste, but an error of campaign judgment: surely a lesser offense. The networks, not surprisingly, remained silent.

Other instances from the campaign of 1982 range between these extremes. As usual, some observers claimed to be fastidiously offended by the entire proceeding. Their attitudes came close to that of one 19th-century Congressman—John Randolph of Virginia—who once proposed bringing down the entire American government by the simple expedient of having all voters stay away from the polls. If nobody voted, Randolph reasoned, the terms of office of all incumbents would expire by statute, no successors could appear (since none would be elected), and a new government would have to be created to replace the collapse of the old. Mr. Randolph's suggestion fell on barren ground in his own time, but his more pessimistic prophecies about calamities to come were amply borne out by the Civil War. But he still may be right on the other score, as evidenced by the diminishing electorate.

There are some who believe that our protracted and increasingly distractive campaign periods are largely responsible for this falling away of the electorate. It seems more likely that deeper causes are to blame. So far as tastefulness is concerned, American election campaigns were never really polite: the 19th century saw some truly vicious confrontations and at least one President was put in office by fraud. But in general the electorate during the 19th century, with the exception of the North-South rupture, was in accord on basic principles. Violations of

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good taste abounded in the view of the more sensitive citizens, but such violations were in tune with what was commonly (though not always openly) accepted. Today we are confronted with a different, and *un*admitted, series of assumptions. Racial and religious politics, which have always existed, have grown increasingly obvious. Today the accusation of racism can ruin careers and create damages that are both unconstitutional and beyond the protection of the courts. Yet such accusations abound. Religious dissension as deep and fierce as any we have ever before seen is now out in the open again, and the opponents of the Moral Majority have taken their place alongside the historic hate groups and—unlike these—menace both civil debate and reasonable action.

Beyond these growing problems, there is the larger and seemingly permanent problem of a government that refuses to listen to the majority of Americans regarding their traditions and opinions. Our courts, which were once held to be unable to rule on constitutional matters (Theodore Roosevelt ran on a third-party platform of establishing special means of overruling the Supreme Court) are now so arrogant that even lowly District Court judges make "constitutional" rulings. In general, the Justices consider themselves beyond reach; they glory in their use of power without force—as though force, as an element in human affairs, has been made obsolete by their rulings.

One result of the indifference of government to the actual desires of the people is that the people are growing increasingly indifferent to the government. Our black markets grow, the American people no longer believe in the equity of the system so tax evasion is now widespread, and discontent looms on all sides. Elections, which once settled issues in this land, are now held almost irrelevant by the losers and the media alike. If elections no longer end arguments, the American system is in trouble. This means that the boundaries of taste, which were once limits upon what was politically possible, are now being stretched beyond recognition. To trace our civil decline, we must look back to the slanderous campaign against Herbert Hoover in the early 1930's. That campaign—by blaming the Depression on a President barred by a Democratic Congress from any effective action—started the rise of the theory that the President is responsible for the entire American economic system. From then on, this argument has been used to expand the government's authority to "help" the public. After all, it's argued, in order to do good one must have the power to do good. In the 50 years since Hoover was felled by this theory, the idea that every citizen should be immunized against shock, surprise, loss, disappointment, and grief has grown into a shibboleth. Instances where Americans have, through no fault of their own, been forced to suffer are now featured in every newspaper and appear nightly on television. The promise that a government can guarantee everyone against such calamities is, of course, one that no government can meet. Yet such promises are made in every campaign by men and women eager for authority and heedless of how they attain it.

Cynicism and disgust are the inevitable consequences of such promises based on such theories. Can a culture endure in the face of such disillusion? Not very likely.

Once the bastions of reason as applied to the reasonable powers of human beings in office crumble, other and lesser principles are bound to give way. These principles are not confined to the political sphere, but influence all people. The boundaries of slander were lowered once the targets were held to be "public figures"; the boundaries against perversion were dropped in the name of free speech and human rights; the boundaries of taste were abandoned when sexual acts appeared on stage and blue movies were packaged into cassettes for family audiences. Can anyone actually believe that politics can be conducted in good taste in such an environment? Or that a decline a la Athens is not possible?

—Otto J. Scott

Mr. Scott is a longtime observer of the American sociopolitical scene. His latest book is The Secret Six.

Social Register

What's the difference between *chic* and *class?* From Sheridan to Proust, many have tried to define it, only to discover that a lot of illusory pitfalls loom along the way. Success may be in sight, however, now that our epoch of chintzy chic is making the distinction easier. Consider *New York* magazine—the

organ of Manhattan arrivistes with some money to spend. We saw there recently a large feature on the famous Dean & DeLuca delicatessen emporium in East Hampton, the Riviera of the Manhattan "in" crowd. The article is written in *NY's* routine sweet-irony-and-sigh-in-jest style, which pretends to deride, but advertises more than chastises. It informs us that there are people who spend $12 for a pound of rice, $14 for a pound of tomatoes, and $120 for four ounces of caviar. Now, that's nothing new, but is it in good taste to blast it from the pages of a large-circulation magazine at a time when people in Flint, Michigan are receiving their final unemployment checks? Of course, it is no worse than the sight of Mr. Dan Rather, multimillionaire anchorman of CBS News, doing a piece on the plight of the jobless in Pennsylvania. What the *New York* and the CBS people have in common is their own sense of ready-to-wear *chic.* The problem, however, is that they think it's *class.* □

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Life as Junk: A Duologue

Jean Stein: *Edie: An American Biography;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

by Gary S. Vasilash

> When Henry Geldzahler and I went to visit Andy [Warhol] at the Factory we talked for a while about the Sixties. . . . I asked him about sin. Andy sat quietly staring at the table: 'I don't know what sin is.' He paused, then turned to Henry, 'What is sin, Henry?'
>
> Jean Stein, quoted in *Edie*

> [Andy Warhol] was really the unconscious conscience of the sixties.
>
> Henry Geldzahler, quoted in *The Scene* by Calvin Tompkins

Reading fashion magazines is a task that few people with a serious interest in culture do unless they have a specific reason (e.g., they like to be well dressed and composed) and to which still fewer will admit. Rather, they read *The New Yorker, Harper's, The Atlantic, Time, Newsweek, National Review, New York Review of Books,* and the like. It is, in a sense, unfortunate that fashion magazines go unread, because their influence on American culture is significant. They determine who's who; what's what ("in" or "out"); which foods should be eaten, when, how much, and how; the type of "look" for which one should strive; what constitutes beauty in any given season; and much more. While the law as given by these glossy magazines may seem as if it is limited in its effects to but a rarified few, that is simply not the case. Their influence is pervasive. Why does K-Mart aim to hang designer clothes on its racks if not because it has been advised that it is important? The pages of any Sunday newspaper in a major city are filled with display ads from department stores that tout names: Halston, Calvin Klein, Saint Laurent. Hollywood has an insatiable need for new faces; fashion models, the cover girls in particular, feed the screen: Lauren Hutton, Brooke Shields. Perrier didn't become a popular beverage simply because people suddenly decided that club soda tastes better in a green bottle from France; the beau monde in America's fashion center, New York, led the quaffing, and the outlying

continued on page 9

Mr. Vasilash is associate editor of the Chronicles.

by Mary Ellen Fox

In the mid-60's, authoress Jean Stein and the eponymous protagonist of this book were as close as sisters. Stein relates this fact in *Women's Wear Daily,* the trade publication of the fashion industry which has become the bible of those dedicated to achieving the chic and affluent existence of the so-called "beautiful people" chronicled in its pages. Stein still can't believe her own naiveté toward Edie. "She was just . . . so poetical . . . so magical," she maintains. So when Edie, comatose with drugs, accidentally set herself and her apartment on fire, Stein invited her to stay as houseguest in her posh Manhattan apartment. Stein looks back on her ignorance of the real cause of the fire, her obliviousness to the reasons why her frequently stocked refrigerator was perennially empty while Edie was there ("She was too slender to have eaten all that food"), and why Edie was in constant panic when her doctor didn't call ("So I thought, well this is sort of strange"). Today, Stein realizes that her guest was bulimic, gorging herself on inhuman amounts of food and then forcing herself to throw up in order to maintain that delightfully fashionable gauntness. She now knows, too, that Edie was totally hooked on an incredible gamut of drugs prescribed for her by one of the many "Dr. Feelgoods" so much in demand in the 60's. "Of course, if I had known, I would have found some way to shelter her but away from my two young children. . . . it's hard to believe I could have been so innocent," an older but wiser Jean Stein asserts today. "The last thing I'd ever want to do would be to exploit. Never, never, never did I want to glamorize that period. . . . I don't think there's one seamless, intact truth, and this book gives the reader a chance to make his or her own interpretation."

The parallels in attitude between Stein and the German population of the years between the First and Second World Wars when confronted with a certain dynamic, charismatic personality bear mention. In the last 40 years it has been repeated countless times that ignorance of evil—and this ignorance itself strains one's credibility—is not an excuse. Stein refers in a self-deprecating but flattering way to her "innocence." Countless Germans have done the same.

Dr. Fox advises a high-fashion boutique.

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Faced with the events in Germany of that epoch, would Stein also maintain the absence of "one seamless, intact truth"? I think not. As for her insistence that this book was never, never, never written to glamorize Edie or the period she incarnated, *WWD* ran a cover picture of a model squatting in front of a mirror applying makeup in exactly the same pose as Edie Sedgwick in a photo published with the aforementioned interview with Jean Stein. The picture is captioned: "The Edie Dress." The copy reads, in part:

> For a brief moment she was the dazzling embodiment of the fast, glittering, underground art scene of the Sixties. Now—with a biography of her short life a best seller—Edie Sedgwick is in the limelight again. . . . Now, [fashion designer Betsey] Johnson resurrects the look for spring. Here her black cotton knit halter-back, Edie mini.

Wouldn't many young girls be tempted to emulate Edie, if only to have a book written about their lives or a dress named after them? Not only is this glamorization, but the now-fashionable "second coming" of Edie is also a trivialization of her life and death. It simultaneously cleanses and banalizes the whole phenomenon of the epoch itself. And this isn't the first time that fashion has zeroed in on past cultural or historical events and heedlessly or even arrogantly exploited them for its own ends. The current obsession with the trappings of nazism comes to mind: Hell's Angels and punkers playfully adorning themselves with swastikas and storm-trooper uniforms to race their bikes and gyrate to their own particular sound.

If anything, *Edie* is an inadvertent exposé of the fashion establishment and its pernicious influence on our culture. From the vantage point of the 80's, the fashion leaders and their groupies can point back to the 60's and shake their heads with resigned disapproval. Today, Edie represents to them a self-destructive, drug-addicted anorectic, when at the moment the cult of the body is where it's at. "Hey, man, I'm into the Eighties now," one former participant in the scene asserts in *Edie*. The economic realities of the present preclude the excesses of the 60's; fashion adapts to the changes and then creates a new and desirable style of being. Ten years from now, these same victims of fashion will be into whatever is fashionable at that point in time. That which is most distinctive of those who were enmeshed in the fashionable lifestyles of the 1960's, how-

Editor's Note

Why American?

Why should *this* life story be epitomized by the adjective "American"? Why couldn't it be a Fairfield County or a Hotel Chelsea inhabitant's biography? What are the idiosyncratically American earmarks of the protagonists? Membership in an old family, or citizenship in New York's gilded sewers does not certify anything as particularly American. We have become accustomed to seeing in American biographies the road from Ellis Island to a Harvard professorship, from an Oklahoma homestead to the U.S. Senate. A Vermont grocer, a Mormon teacher, a Texas oil worker, a North Carolina unionized seamstress, an Amish farmer all may have their curriculum vitae legitimately characterized as American. But the wretched object of this book about vile and foolish people—told and written by wicked, self-serving, obtuse people—is a miserable human protozoan, quite identical with countless other particles of subhumanness that can be found in the gutters of Paris, London, Valparaiso.

Does the central character, an ugly-beautiful person incarnate, symbolize anything American? Yes she does, even if in a very marginal way: her persona and her lot in life encapsulate a peculiar brand of decadence that will be associated with this juncture of American history. The beginning of this disgusting volume features a reproduction of John Singer Sargent's portrait of Edie Sedgwick's grandparents; at the end, we see pictures of the naked and drugged heroine done in Andy Warhol's visual media. The path from art to "art" is neatly traced, and it somehow reflects the descent from American culture to the liberal culture. And this is the only relevance to the endemic that Ms. Sedgwick's paltry life—and her apologists' cheap and reprehensible exertions—have. As such, the book can be termed The Fall of an American Archetype. Another of its "heroes," commercial "artist" Warhol, personifies the ultimate effluvium of the liberal culture: a nullity who has been declared an artist by the supreme reign of the sleazy fashion subculture.

The decadence and decay of persons, families, standards, traditions are nothing new: their documentation ranges from sensationalism to literary masterpieces. America has certainly entered a stage of her history when the speed of her unprecedented fortunes is accelerating some processes that usually affect nations at a slower pace. But the fight for America's civilizational health is far from over. That's why we attach importance to this book—which is actually just another shoddy publishing happening. Those who are responsible for it are ruthless, snobbish propagandists for the ugly-beautiful people (a pop-cultural entrepreneur, a daughter of a corporate tycoon with ties to the Kennedy family), and they obviously deem their work an étude of contemporary compassion. As a rule, nations are ashamed of their Edies; the implication of this awful book is that we should be gratified, or even proud, that we have them.

All in all, it's a piece of modish, purple, advocacy journalism, an epiphenomenon that is given a fraudulent "depth" and a pseudohumanistic significance. Its cosmeticized version of murder smells curiously like totalitarian methods of dealing with truth and exactitude. After all, *Edie* is an edict of the Imperial Party of Fashion, of its unsavory establishment and its impeccable sway over the realm of chic sin, of its never-ending struggle for domination over *this* society by means of the *Pravdas* and *Stürmers* published by Condé Nast. And to create legend out of refuse is a time-honored fascist, or communist, practice. (LT) □

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ever, is that so many simply didn't survive. Edie was not the only one who didn't make it. And the influential trend-setters, the celebrities, and the culture heroes so beloved of the media who have managed to survive, look back now on the casualties not with any compassion toward their comrades but with an attitude tinged with contempt, as if to imply: "Hey, man, it was only a game. You took it too seriously. The thing was to belong, to enjoy, to participate but not to overindulge the way you poor creeps did." *WWD* has devised the appellation "Fashion Victim" (FV) and scornfully attaches it to any woman who follows the dictates of fashionable dress, even the ones endorsed by the editors themselves, *too* conscientiously. All the Edies of the 60's generation are FV's according to today's trend-setters.

One outstanding presence on the scene who was assuredly not an FV was Andy Warhol. On the contrary, Warhol is a surviving profiteer and is too much with us today. Over and over again, the voices appearing in *Edie* refer to him as "voyeur," "parasite," one who was surrounded by drugs and never indulged, who orchestrated excesses reminiscent of Hieronymus Bosch but declined to participate. Formerly an active homosexual, Warhol himself has confessed to a life of celibacy for many years. Without a doubt the most famous quasi-artist in America, his is a name recognized even by those who are ignorant of art. Almost everyone is familiar with his paintings of Campbell Soup cans, his portraits of Marilyn Monroe and Mao Tse-tung. The latter, like most of Warhol's output, are not original paintings at all but photographs that have been blown up and colored over. He was known, according to *Edie,* for having members of his artistic and social milieu, so aptly designated as The Factory, paint everything for him; when this fact leaked out it threw dim-witted collectors into a panic that they had invested in worthless, ersatz Warhols. He had to make a public retraction to keep the market stable. His movies have included *Empire* (eight continuous hours of the Empire State Building) and *Vinyl,* noted for its torture scene. *Vinyl* was also the first appearance of Edie Sedgwick in a Warhol production. A Warhol scriptwriter is quoted in *Edie:* "As best as I can articulate about the average Warhol film, the way to work was to work for no meaning." Warhol himself has stated: "I make nothing happen. . . . I'm still obsessed with the idea of looking into the mirror and seeing no one, nothing." And Warhol is right. The ultimate decadence that characterizes his contributions to our culture *is* nothingness, the destruction of the rudimentary values of art and life which culminates in soup cans and the frenzy of mechanical sex and drugs leading to spiritual and physical annihilation.

"And what a buffet! Here is proof again that minor—even wasted—lives can provoke eminent and estimable accounts. The range of sensibility and idiom captured and displayed in these pages . . . is of a kind and quality assembled elsewhere only by Studs Turkel."

—*New York Times Book Review*

"Jean Stein's remarkable book . . . reads in some respects like a classic novel."

—*Harper's*

Truman Capote, not the most prepossessing personality himself, nevertheless has some pointed remarks about his old acquaintance:

> I think, looking back, that at a very early age he had decided what it was he wanted: fame—that is, to be a famous person. His drive was simply that fame was the name of the game . . . not really talent. Not art. . . . Mind you, I'm not saying that Andy Warhol doesn't have any talent, because obviously he has *some;* he has to. But I can't put my finger on *what* it is that he's talented at, except that he's a genius as a self-publicist.

Warhol, then, as a symbol of the culture of our time, is a product created both *by* and *for* the media. He was shrewd enough to recognize quite early in his career that ours is an epoch of so-called media hype, where something is fabricated from nothingness by constant exposure and the adulation of radio, TV, and the press, all of which manufacture the cultural phenomena so devastating in their effects. At the same time, the media can create nothingness out of something of value simply by ignoring its presence or disintegrating its stature.

The second villain in the saga—more powerful than Warhol—is the collective fashion media, with Diana Vreeland as a symbolic if not actual leader. This former editor of *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue* dubbed Edie Sedgwick a "Youthquaker." "Everything you read—every paper, magazine—told you how fabulous it was to be young; youth was *it*," relates one interviewee. To be over 30 was decidedly not chic. And so grandmothers adopted miniskirts while grandfathers covered their bald spots with flowing locks. These FV's believed what the media incessantly repeated; they bought the package. Thus Vreeland (born around the turn of the century) and her organ, *Vogue*, celebrated their favorite Youthquaker in 1965: "Edie is 22, going whither, God knows, but at a great rate!" The accuracy of the description is ironic in the extreme. Another *Vogue* editor who supervised a photography session with Edie is quoted:

> Edie Sedgwick captured the quality [of *The Blue Angel*] in this black lingerie with the white stockings and her white skin. It had a little of Berlin in it. . . . [Her life] was a little messy, a little out of control . . . it wasn't sound, obviously, it was going to lead to trouble. She was very

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> mixed up. But I was mad about her. . . . I remember saying [to Vreeland] 'We've got a star! There's no doubt about it, she's terrific! A great model! We should do a whole issue on her.'

When questioned, Vreeland reminisces about this charming creature with the lovely skin whom she considers "one of the true personalities of the Sixties." She compares the 60's to the 20's—the other American decade where youth was the dominant cultural force—and concludes that although the two eras have much in common, the 20's "unfortunately . . . added up to very little. . . . I think the Sixties will add up to much more." And she says this with total lack of embarrassment, dismissing the time of Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Bessie Smith while extolling that of Timothy Leary, Charles Reich, and Mick Jagger.

The movie *Ciao! Manhattan,* a sort of camped-up, cinema-verité version of a few years in the life and death of Edie Sedgwick (and having an extravagantly popular revival these days) chronicles, among other activities, her drug abuse, promiscuity, and even shock-treatment sessions. Appearing here, Edie has perhaps the final word:

> I was Girl of the Year and all that crap. . . . I'd freak out in a very physical way. And it was all taken as a fashion trend, *Vogue* photographed me . . . then the newspapers took it up because Andy and I ended up appearing in the same places. . . . I'm a little nervous saying anything about "the Artist" because it kind of sticks him right between the eyes, but he deserves it. Warhol really f----- up a great many people's—young people's—lives. My introduction to heavy drugs came through the Factory. I liked the introduction to drugs I received. I was a good target for the scene; I blossomed into a healthy young drug addict.

Edie Sedgwick is dead. She paid for her weaknesses, her errors of judgment, her bad choices. Andy Warhol and Diana Vreeland are not only very much around, but overthrown with honor, wealth, and recognition. They are the paradigmatic archetypes of our lamentable, wretched, abused "national" culture. They influenced countless Edies to choose the so-called glamorous and exciting life they endorsed. Jean Stein presents these people nonjudgmentally and gives the reader the opportunity to render his or her own judgment. Well, this reader certainly has. □

Vasilash

continued from page 6, column 1

areas fell into step. *Glamour, Vogue,* and the rest set the key—or do without it, if atonal is big—and, like it or not, everyone ends up listening. It is now critically vital to be chic, even in burgs where that state of being is pronounced like the word for a baby fowl.

Consider Andy Warhol, a man made by and, in a sense, living on fashion magazines and the ancillary activities they chronicle. Few 20th-century American artists have a name with such cachet as that of the graduate of Schenley High School, Pittsburgh, class of 1945, and Carnegie Institute of Technology, class of 1949. Mention the name George Segal, and most people will immediately call to mind the actor, not the creator of plaster people. There's no mistaking Warhol. Warhol is the son of Czech immigrants; his father was a coal miner in West Virginia. After Carnegie Tech, Andrew Warhola II went to New York. Warhol—he shortened it and stopped using Andre, a name that appears on works in the '48-'49 period (as shown in *Andy Warhol, His Early Works, 1947-1959,* compiled by Andreas Brown, Gotham Book Mart Gallery, New York, 1971)—hit the streets, looking for a spot to place his cartoonlike drawings. He met a woman named Tina Fredericks, who was, at the time, art editor at *Glamour.* She gave him his break. His first commercial work is a full-page drawing of shoes and illustrations for an article entitled "Success is a Job in New York," all for the September 1949 issue of *Glamour.* From *Glamour,* a number of other jobs sprang up, such as for *Mademoiselle.* A most important break—in terms of both money and publicity—came from I. Miller, a fairly exclusive shop, for which he drew more shoe ads. Warhol was—and is—a commercial artist in that his is a craft practiced to make money, not to create something of a noneconomic value. However, Warhol was working in New York at a time when there was much ferment in the art world, when Oldenburg, Rauschenberg, and Johns were emerging. He scurried about in his blonde wig and "slumming" clothes, picking up on and taking part in the action. One portrait of Warhol that appears in *Edie* is very telling. In 1961, Walter Hopps was an art dealer. Describing a visit to Warhol during that year, he says, "the floor . . . was not a foot deep, but certainly covered wall to wall with every sort of pulp movie magazine, fan magazine, and trade sheet having to do with popular stars or rock 'n' roll. Warhol wallowed in it." (The alliterative verb in the final sentence makes associations inevitable.) It's clear that Warhol was acutely conscious of fashions and stars, and his life's work was—and is—making himself one of the trend-setters, a star, both vicariously—as through Edie Sedgwick—and in his own right. In *Andy Warhol's Exposures* (Andy Warhol Books/Grosset & Dunlap, New York, 1979), the title page says: "photographs by Andy Warhol," yet in the book there are shots of Andy and Isabel Eberstadt, Andy in Plains, Georgia, Andy in Kuwait, Andy shooting a Polaroid of Willy Brandt, Andy and Christopher Isherwood, and more. Andy is showing himself to be a star. That he shouldn't be the man *behind* the camera for "photographs by Andy Warhol" is not particularly surprising—he is the man who once had a stand-in do a college lecture tour.

Legitimacy for Warhol came in a big way when he hooked up with Henry

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Geldzahler. In 1960 Geldzahler worked in the Department of American Paintings and Sculpture at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York as a curatorial assistant, and his rise from that first post has been nothing short of meteoric. In his essay on Geldzahler in *The Scene: Reports on Post-modern Art* (Viking Press, New York, 1976) Calvin Tompkins writes of his subject in 1960: "At this time . . . Geldzahler saw a great deal of Andy Warhol. Although Warhol was still two years away from his first New York show, Geldzahler never doubted that he was an important artist." Tompkins also says, "sometimes [Geldzahler] gave Warhol ideas for paintings," and notes that Geldzahler appeared in early Warhol films. Something in Geldzahler's belief in Warhol smacks of self-fulfilling prophecy: that a man who drew shoe ads and decorated department-store windows "was an important artist." Another figure emerges on the scene: Jean Stein Vanden Heuvel. Writes Tompkins: "Geldzahler and Mrs. Vanden Heuvel had met by accident in 1958, at the Barnes Foundation, in Pennsylvania; she had seen him surreptitiously photographing a van Gogh (the Barnes Foundation does not allow photographs), and they had both giggled." Partners in punk crime from the start. Mrs. Vanden Heuvel is, of course, Jean Stein, the biographer of Edie Sedgwick. Another character must be added to the cast of this modern amorality play, one whom Andy Warhol—or someone else speaking in his voice—calls in his *Exposures* his "favorite date" and who was invited by Ronald Reagan to dine in the White House: Diana Vreeland. Vreeland has been extremely influential in the fashion world for a number of years: *Harper's Bazaar* . . . *Vogue* . . . the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute—all of these, at one time or another, were under her imperium.

Andy, Henry, Jean, Diana. And Edie.

Edith Minturn Sedgwick was born on April 30, 1943. She died November 16, 1971 as Edith Sedgwick Post of, according to the Santa Barbara County (California) Coroner's Register, "Barbiturate over-dose," which is classified in the report as "Accident/Suicide." During her short life—and especially now, years after it—she was best known as simply "Edie." Whether Edie was just a misguided young woman, the product of a family whose blood lines were weak, or a conniving tart who put her body on the block for kicks rather than cash is of little importance. What is important is *why* Jean Stein, with the able editorial assistance of George Plimpton, exhumed this woman and led her family, friends, and acquaintances in a paean to her memory. The answer to the question is a simple one, but it involves the other characters already described: Warhol, Geldzahler, Stein, Vreeland, and others of their ilk are, in a word, evil. *Evil,* of course, is a very unchic word, one which is to be spoken only on one day of the week from a specific location: on Sundays from a pulpit. Modern people—at least those who are "with it"—don't think that anyone existent today is actually evil, and if these people use the word, it is only when applied to a Caligula or a Hitler. Yet even those two are being cleansed in the waters of situation ethics, so the word may pass out of use. However, what other word can be used to describe people who blithely stood by and watched while an individual was being physically, mentally, and spiritually destroyed?

Warhol wanted to be a star in the 60's; he became one. Part of his program to achieve his goal included the making of what he and others termed "superstars" —not Newman or Streisand, but Paul America and Viva. The rationale is simple: if Warhol associated with superstars, he, too, must be one. One who gained such status in Warhol's stable/Factory/rat's nest was Edie, a passably attractive girl in her early twenties who had large dark eyes and an unextraordinary figure. As for her "talent"—well, it seems to have been nothing more than the ability both to be pliable enough to fit the situation and, simultaneously, to mold that situation to fit herself. It's worth noting that she was, at the time, a veteran of mental hospitals. One thing cannot be overemphasized: Warhol could not make himself—or anyone else—an important public figure by himself. Thomas Gray wasn't the first to point out that "Some mute inglorious Milton" didn't make it because of a lack of what would now be termed "media attention." Warhol got such attention, in

LIBERAL CULTURE

Who's Elitist?

We read in a recent statement released by the National Education Association (a labor union, not a professional organization according to a recent court ruling) that the current administration is destroying public education through its "elitist philosophy." However, on the "Letters" page of a recent issue of *NEA Today,* the association's organ, we find a rather different picture: both letters under "Creation, Humanism" spoke of the frequent insensitivity of secularists to the religious beliefs of their students; five of the six letters under "Reagan and the Budget" challenged the rabid anti-Reaganism of NEA leaders; and the only letter under "School Prayer" called NEA

"narrow-minded" in its opposition to prayer in schools. Writes one of these distressed correspondents: "While our organization is bemoaning the fact that parents are abandoning the public schools for private and parochial institutions, we offer no compromise or incentive to keep the children in the public schools." So—who's elitist? NEA's members, its leaders, or Reagan? □

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spades. First there were the fashion magazines, a continuing source of exposure for Warhol. They made Andy. He was—and is—their boy: in the September 1982 issue of *Vogue,* for example, there are three consecutive, full-color, two-page ad spreads for Halston, an arrangement that, in terms of size, location, and printing is not inexpensive. Each spread is for one or a group of Halston's lines. Each is a drawing boldly signed "Andy Warhol." Thirty-three years passed between this series and his first page of shoes in *Glamour;* Andy is still the fair-haired boy.

However, fashion magazines alone couldn't do the trick; they needed assistance. On the one hand there was the influential Henry Geldzahler, the man who was certain that Warhol was an "important artist." On the other—and more significantly—there was the general media. In *Edie* there is a photograph of the opening of a show of Warhol's work that was held in 1965 at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia. It shows a mob scene. The mob is not composed of people with long hair, beads, tank tops, and ragged jeans, but of men with short hair and suits; the only woman in the photo is Edie. All of those gentlemen—or a good number of them—probably weren't art enthusiasts. They probably were reporters for above-ground publications. Also included in *Edie* is a snippet from the society or gossip column of the New York *World Telegram* of September 14, 1965, which notes that "Clip-coiffed Edie Sedgwick upstaged *The Vampires* on screen at the Lincoln Center film festival last night as she swept in on the arm of Andy Warhol." Then there's part of a layout from *Life* magazine, November 26, 1965, headlined, "The Girl with the Black Tights," who is defined in the text as "Edie Sedgwick, a 22-year-old New York socialite, great-granddaughter of the founder of Groton and currently the 'superstar' of Andy Warhol's underground movies." The series of photos show Edie wearing T-shirt tops and tights and doing the Frug or some other then-"in" dance. The *Life* text goes on to say: "Her style may not be for everybody, but its spirited wackiness is just right for lively girls with legs like Edie's." "Just right for lively girls": the words are the incantation of a bloody horror when considered in relation to the kind of life that "lively" Edie was leading: a random yet consistent pattern of drugs, sex, and booze.

Warhol was legitimized in these pages of *Life* and the others. Edie was just there as a vehicle to put on the $155 Rudi Gernreich dresses and the $40 Kenneth Jay Lane earrings (1965 dollars) and to vamp in public or in front of the camera, on command. In the 60's, automobiles were considered disposable products: drive one for two years, then trade it in for another. Warhol was a product of the marketing mind: he put his miles on Edie Sedgwick, then dumped her for another "superstar." Unlike the automobiles, however, Edie was worn out and even more defective when he was through with *her,* not *it,* though the impersonal pronoun fits Warhol's context.

As noted, Henry Geldzahler was very influential on Warhol's stock in the art world. In the biographical notes in *Edie,* the following entry appears for Geldzahler:

> 'I was a friend and counselor of Edie's. During the Sixties I was the curator of Twentieth Century Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. I remained a curator and, in 1978, became Commissioner of Cultural Affairs for the City of New York.'

In *Edie* Geldzahler says that from the time he started working at the Metropolitan, 1960, he saw Warhol "just about every day" for six years. In 1966 Warhol was essentially through with Edie. Warhol's Factory was a common meeting place, and it was probably there, or at one of the many fashionable parties of the day, that he met Edie. Geldzahler, based on his capsule résumé, would seem to be a responsible man. How he can say "I was a friend and a counselor of Edie's" is beyond civilized belief: what kind of friend or counselor permits his pal or confidant to skip down the road to hell? Edie Sedgwick—silver-dyed hair and designer fashions notwithstanding—was not a piece of art in a living museum; she was a human being, albeit a flawed one. Yet it seems that very few—if any—in the New York art scene treated her as anything but a piece of sculpture or as one of those inflatable plastic women that are for sale in porn shops. The past tense of the verb in Geldzahler's self-description doesn't indicate that it's terminal past tense. His position and influence on "Cultural Affairs" in the city that sets them for other cities, his claim to warmth and advice for Edie, are enough to induce nausea.

In her biographical note, Diana Vreeland—undoubtedly in a tone indicating pride—says, "I was a friend of the family and, as editor of *Vogue,* where Edie posed for us—which she did beautifully—I was her employer." Friendship must be cheap in those circles. In the August 1965 *Vogue* there's a reference to Edie as a "Youthquaker"; "twenty-two, white-haired with anthracite-black eyes and legs to swoon over, who stars in Andy Warhol's underground movies." There is also a photo of Edie in black tights. Vreeland gave Edie much more space in the March 15, 1966 *Vogue;* Edie was the subject of a spread. Remembering Edie for the biography, Vreeland says this about Edie at the time of the shooting session:

> 'She was so happy with the world. She was charming. She suggested springtime and freshness. She was very clean and clear. . . . Freshness and proportion and a sense of the sort of rollick of life, you know, the fun of life. . . . Edie had a wonderful look about her. Lovely skin, but then I've never seen anyone on drugs that didn't have wonderful skin.'

At this time, reports of others in the book indicate that Edie was taking drugs at such a rate that, compared to her, the

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characters of *Valley of the Dolls* are non-abusers. Vreeland, the woman who sets the tone for one of the leading fashion magazines, "a friend of the family," saw "springtime and freshness" in Edie and dismissed narcotics use as being on par with the use of cold cream. It smacks of, if not criminal, then moral negligence. Edie was presented not merely as a fashion model in the pages of *Vogue,* but as a *role* model: dress like Edie; be like Edie. Edie died from an overdose of barbiturates; Vreeland supped at the White House.

Then there's Jean Stein, buddy of Henry, who is the pal of Andy, whose favorite date is Diana. Quite a cabal. The biography Stein has created is dishonest, from the dust jacket to the final page. Stein selected quotes and massaged them into the shape required for her ceremony. The dust jacket, in tasteful pastels, shows a drawing of a handsome pin-up girl with stylishly coiffed blonde hair, smooth skin, jewelry, a white shift, and black pointed pumps who is reclining as if to get a suntan. She is presumably Edie. There is another picture in the book of Edie which shows a bedraggled, greasy-haired wench who is bare to the midriff, with silicone-injected breasts. This is Edie the star of *Ciao! Manhattan,* a film that was re-released thanks to the success of Stein's book. The idealized portrait is the one that comes through the pages of the book.

But no matter which of the two emerges, there is an image that looms immanent in the text, one that indicates the large scheme in which Warhol, Stein, and the rest play key roles. Edie is enshrined as a madonna of sorts, an off-white, transcendent being that acts as an unachievable paradigm for certain others. Such elevation of a well-bred urchin to a position of exaltation is, of course, an act that has significant parallels with the puffing-up of a moderately adept young man with a crayon. The question that remains, one that is never answered in *Edie* because those who should answer it don't acknowledge the existence of such a question, is: Why?

As indicated, Edie was a vehicle for Warhol; as such, she became the object of attention of others, like Geldzahler, Vreeland, and Stein. Fashion models are known in the trade as "mannequins," ostensibly because they are manipulated with the same disregard as their plaster counterparts are. They, too, are vehicles. Edie was a fashion model, but in that role she wasn't as successful as the before-mentioned Lauren Hutton or Brooke Shields, two females who have been known to be controversial beyond the fashion photographer's focal range, particularly Shields. Neither, I think, will ever achieve the status of Edie amongst the unholy congregation. Should either Hutton or Shields die of a drug overdose, the reaction, inasmuch as there would be one, wouldn't stretch beyond a touch of kindness. But there is *no* pity for Edie, nor can there be. By dying she fulfilled her role as demigoddess. A demigoddess, of course, is one part human, one part inferior god. Mythology is full of tales of gods wishing to be, in one respect, like humans, since the lower creatures could sate their appetites in ways that the gods couldn't. Edie could have it both ways: she could wallow in the New York scene with Warhol and the other gods and goddesses; she could wallow in the mud with equal dexterity. When seen from a lofty mountain top by those frustrated by the inhibitions imposed by their tradition, the grimy acts appear awfully inviting because those observers can't see the pain and are far removed from feeling it.

But the true excitement those beings feel about Edie isn't a vicarious one, for—like their Olympian counterparts—they had a decisive role in manipulating the actions of their object. They have a stake in Edie. As their art, their photography, their clothing, their writings, and their lifestyle are good by fiat, so too is Edie. She, like the rest, is a product of the pantheon. As a demigoddess she was not quite a participant, but she was far from an accessory. That she was a flawed creation few people can deny. Warhol, Stein, Vreeland, and Geldzahler undoubtedly know it. But rather than hiding the flaw or decrying its existence, they enshrine it, make it a model. They pervert meaning, but as they are the self-appointed ones who provide definitions, as culture is something for which they provide the parameters, horror becomes pleasure. Edie becomes an exemplar. And they need not feel any shame—what they made, they say, is good.

The entire biography (with the exception of some press clippings, such as those described above) consists of quotes solicited by Stein from people who knew Edie, including several family members, or who knew her associates. Stein and Plimpton are among the quoted. It would seem that this approach would result in a most veracious biography: after all, the author plays a minor role—or so it seems. Stein picked the interviewees. She selected which she would use, what form they would take, and against which they would be juxtaposed. She notes—in very small type—in the Afterword:

> Every effort has been made to retain each individual's unique conversational style, excerpting entire passages verbatim from the interviews whenever possible. . . . In some cases, names and places have been changed to preserve the anonymity of certain individuals.

In other words, *Edie* is as close to accuracy as a script for the television show *Dragnet.* No one says "uh," as they would in a verbatim transcript, and the grammar of even the leading drug-users is nothing short of extraordinary. The words attributed to the various people bring to mind "photographs by Andy Warhol." Stein's biography is as biased as one written to order for a politburo, which, in a sense, it is. *Edie* is the celebration of participants in a morally bankrupt lifestyle who party on the edge of a precipice. Should a young girl fall off the edge to her death, then all the better: call her a sacrifice to the Goddess of Fashion and frolic all the harder. □

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Western Legitimacy

Herbert R. Lottman: *The Left Bank;* Houghton Mifflin; Boston.

Steven M. Tipton: *Getting Saved From the Sixties;* University of California Press; Berkeley.

by Daniel J. O'Neil

How many citizens can reject the ideological basis of a society before that society collapses? What happens to a society when its underlying beliefs, myths, and symbols cease to inspire? There have been historical periods when first the intellectuals and subsequently important popular sectors abjured the official ideology and sought alternatives. Such was apparently the case with 4th-century B.C. Greece, 4th-century A.D. Rome, the late Middle Ages, late 18th-century France, and late 19th-century Russia. Perhaps a similar phenomenon is occurring in the contemporary West, as indicated by the fact that first large numbers of intellectuals and later significant groupings of the less sophisticated have become dissatisfied with the Greco-Roman, Judeo-Christian, humanistic-Enlightenment mix that supports Western culture and institutions.

It is at such a time of ambiguity and challenge that the sect or cult—in either religious or secular form—presents its most potent appeal. Its nature, rationale, and clientele have been perceptively chronicled by Eric Voegelin in *The New Science of Politics,* by Ronald Knox in *Enthusiasm,* and by Norman Cohn in *The Pursuit of the Millennium.* Its characteristics are generally the same, though in varying combinations. There is a rejection of the external world as materialistic, corrupt, and doomed. There is the sense of possessing a gnostic truth denied most mortals. There is an emphasis on separating the tares from the wheat and constructing a community of the redeemed in *this* world. There is an apocalyptic sense of impending doom ("this age is crucial and now is man's last chance"). There is a rejection of nominalism and a demand for enthusiasm and witness. To the degree that it is successful and provides a basis for a new order, a sect often evolves into a church. The routinization of charisma so poignantly described by Max Weber occurs. The charismatics are replaced by bureaucrats; enthusiasm is disciplined and channeled; a place is found for the lukewarm; and the end is postponed indefinitely. The new church may then become a target of sectarian schisms.

There is a thread linking the Lottman and Tipton books. It is the rejection syndrome that spread from Western intellectuals to the masses during the 60's and 70's, as well as the subsequent attempt to reinterpret and rebuild. It is the movement from destruction to construction. Lottman describes the milieu of the French-centered intellectuals between 1930 and 1950, and notes their skepticism of their ideological heritage and their flirtation with totalitarianism. It is a story of conferences, manifestos, and pilgrimages to the latest utopia, a snapshot of the literati gnawing at the foundations without concern for responsibility or ramification. *The Left Bank* is rich in color and vignettes, but it attempts little explanation of what is portrayed. Tipton focuses on a few of the less-notable casualties of the 60's who are attempting to restore order and meaning to their lives via fundamentalist Christianity, Zen Buddhism, or 20th-century Benthamism. His book is American sociology at its best. It deals with a vital question and is both descriptive and explanatory. The connection between Lottman and Tipton is in their portrayal of the alienated. Lottman's calculating intellectuals and Tipton's aging hippies had been in revolt against the middle-class world that nurtured and rewarded them. Most of them sought a sectarian response. Having questioned the traditional basis of order, many were confronted with the need to rebuild. The slogans of the 60's, of course, proved ephemeral. Each of Tipton's movements—while rejecting traditional questions and answers—did involve the cult of the leader, a new emphasis on discipline, a search for meaning and community, and a reinterpretation of work that resurrected the much-disparaged Protestant work ethic. Each movement, in terms of its emphasis, was constructive.

Interesting as the two works are, what is probably more fundamental than the story of French intellectual fads, or sectarian attempts at salvation, is the unexamined explanation for the rejection of the traditional belief pattern. Why at this particular time did the old beliefs fail to motivate and to demand affection? Why did so many French intellectuals reject an indigenous solution to the problems of a generation? Why did Tipton's subjects turn to Buddhist monasticism rather than to their own Christian asceticism? Why didn't his extreme fundamentalists find solace in mainstream Protestantism? Insights that attempt to account for the decline of belief must be speculative, but it would seem that there are a number of factors that, collectively, have contributed to the apostasy of our age and the search for alternatives. The Greco-Roman, Judeo-Christian, humanistic-Enlightenment mix has prob-

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ably been strained by the following factors.

(1) The breakdown of the traditional family has created a vacuum. For many the affection, warmth, and security once provided by the family is no more. These human needs still exist; hence, the search elsewhere for the vital family services. The sect—whether religious or secular—often claims to compensate by creating a new family based upon belief and commitment rather than biology.

(2) Many today are overwhelmed by the complexity of modernity. Vast areas are beyond the reach of even the most sophisticated. The academic emphasis is upon narrow specialization. The more we know the less we seem to understand. For many, complexity causes frustration and a search for simplicity. There is a temptation to seek the Rosetta stone or a return to some golden age when the world seemed intelligible. The sect offers a simple explanation of reality and a remedy to human trauma.

(3) For some inexplicable reason, there has been a modern revitalization of the 19th-century romanticism that questioned the Greco-Roman, humanistic-Enlightenment component of the Western ideological mix. Against order, continuity, and civility it posed flux, experimentation, and emotion. It stressed the virtue of the exotic, less-developed, more primitive regions, viewing them as equal or superior to the middle-class, bourgeois, staid European world. It totally rejected the progressive-developmental theory of history. It legitimized Third World philosophies and cults and encouraged deference to Third World demands that previous generations would have ignored. It universalized the West, introducing options that were not previously available, but it strained a once-existing ideological consensus.

(4) Recently Western man has espoused an ethos that rewards self-criticism and encourages self-loathing. Revisionist history stresses the negative, portraying a Western legacy of violence and exploitation. It evaluates the West in terms of a norm of utopian perfection rather than from a historical and comparative perspective. Little room is left for cultural pride. Naturally, the more sensitive have turned from their society to seek other alternatives. Man always seeks units of identity and, when the inherited ones fail, he seeks others.

(5) The pervasive liberal dogma that dominates so much of Western thought tends to be obsessed with change. It perceives society in mechanical rather than organic terms, and thus offers unlimited opportunities for experimentation and transformation. There is optimal faith in innovation, but the latest reform never quite satisfies. It is but a precedent for another change. Liberal Episcopalians, for example, have moved from the demand for female priests to lesbian priests to no priests to romanticizing Eastern Orthodox traditional priests—all in one generation. Liberal dogma, in essence, encourages each generation to be dissatisfied with the ideology it has inherited.

(6) The old order of church and state demands minimal sacrifice from its clientele, and it is reluctant to inconvenience or to discipline. This conflicts with a primordial belief that truth and value involve considerable cost. In contrast, the sects and totalitarian mass movements demand and receive a maximal commitment of time, labor, and resources.

It is unlikely that Lottman's intellectuals or Tipton's exotic cults will solve many of the problems confronting Western society. A more likely source of recovery would be the revitalization of the old ideology after this flirtation with the bizarre. One can hope that in historical retrospect the 60's and 70's will be viewed as merely a brief aberration. □

A Slow and Secret Poison

Joan Abse: *John Ruskin: The Passionate Moralist;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

Patricia B. Craddock: *Young Edward Gibbon: Gentleman of Letters;* Johns Hopkins University Press; Baltimore.

by Robert C. Steensma

Their careers were separated by a century and their personalities and interests were perhaps as different as one can imagine, yet both Edward Gibbon and John Ruskin were among the first rank of writers in their times, and both were perceptive commentators on the decline of civilization. Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* despite the work of later historians, remains one of the benchmarks of modern historiography; Ruskin's almost 40 volumes of aesthetic commentary, art history, social economy, and cultural criticism have earned him a place among the most eminent of 19th-century intellectuals. Yet Gibbon has suffered that fate of so many classic writers: he is talked about most by people who have never read him. And Ruskin is commonly viewed as an exhibit in a cabinet of Victorian curios. Both men deserve much better, for each has a great deal to say to a modern civilization whose vitals are afflicted by a cultural cancer. In our time, when "18th-century" and "Victorian" are merely convenient semantic cudgels wielded by political neurotics, when modernists have replaced the City of God with a slum, Gibbon and Ruskin are critically meaningful.

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Although they break little new ground, the recent biographies of Ruskin and Gibbon by Joan Abse and Patricia B. Craddock are full of insights and stylistic grace. But the scholar will continue to find useful the traditional biographies of Gibbon by G.M. Young and D.M. Lowe and of Ruskin by E.T. Cooke and R.H. Wilenski. Craddock's book is the first to make use of a substantial body of primary sources previously unavailable, and her notes are both copious and enlightening. The major achievement of her work is the close examination she gives to Gibbon's historical apprenticeship down to the year 1773, when he began writing *The Decline and Fall.* Abse's book is also well-written, though it sometimes becomes too romantic.

Gibbon worked at a time when historical writing was not far removed from hagiography and political propaganda. There had been a few historians —Voltaire, David Hume, and William Robertson, for example—who had begun to think of history in a more analytic way. But, to borrow a phrase Dr. Johnson applied to Dryden in a different context, Gibbon found history as brick and turned it into marble. *The Decline and Fall,* which covers almost 14 centuries, from Trajan (98 A.D.) to the fall of Constantinople (1453), is a monument to the author and to the civilization he describes, despite the later work of such eminent historians of Rome as Theodor Mommsen and Michael Rostovtzeff. Gibbon saw the demise of Rome as "the greatest, perhaps, and most awful scene in the history of mankind." Fascinated by the spectacle of Rome, he sought the causal sequences that diminished the empire's greatness. Admiring the political order which nurtured the arts of civilization, he abhorred the effeminate luxury and modes of thought which hastened the Roman decline. Deploring the curtailment of democratic institutions by various emperors, he admired the classical virtues of reason and restraint which had built Rome. Gibbon looked back from the perspective of English neoclassicism to Rome, and he saw a tragedy in which a magnificent and noble culture had been overthrown by barbarian force, bureaucratic obesity, and popular ignorance. As he describes it, "The decline of genius was soon followed by the corruption of taste." And near the end of his final volume he sadly summarizes: "I have described the triumph of barbarism and religion."

His attack on early Christianity still grates upon the sensitivities of some readers. For example, he characterizes Roman Christianity as an institution in which "Credulity performed the office of faith; fanaticism was permitted to assume the language of inspiration, and the effects of accidents or contrivance were ascribed to supernatural causes." As a deist and rationalist, Gibbon was trying to explain Christianity's triumph in Rome on purely human and rational grounds, but he was equally skeptical of all Roman religions: "The various modes of worship which prevailed in the Roman world were all considered by the people as equally true; by the philosophers as equally false; and by the magistrate as equally useful. And thus toleration produced not only mutual indulgence, but even relgious concord."

For Gibbon, Rome was at its zenith when, in "the second century of the Christian era, the Empire of Rome comprehended the fairest part of the earth, and the most civilized portion of mankind. . . . The gentle but powerful influence of laws and manners had gradually cemented the union of the provinces. Their peaceful inhabitants enjoyed and abused the advantages of wealth and luxury. The image of a free constitution was preserved with decent reverence; the Roman senate appeared to possess the sovereign authority, and devolved on the emperors all the executive powers of government." Gibbon admired perseverance, moderation, justice, courage, and especially success when it was allied to virtue. The causes of Rome's decline and fall were not so much individual as cultural: luxury, vanity, fanaticism, arrogance, sloth, and pride in all segments of society—Christian and pagan, Roman and barbarian. Rome was a victim, too, of its success: "This long peace, and the uniform government of the Romans, introduced a slow and secret poison into the vitals of the empire. The minds of men were gradually reduced to the same level, the fire of genius was extinguished, and even the military spirit evaporated." The pleasure of reading Gibbon is sometimes marred by the reader's uncomfortable awareness of 20th-century analogies.

Ruskin's career, unlike Gibbon's, was tempestuous from the beginning and ended in madness. Brought up in a fanatically religious home, he was a mental invalid, an emotional time bomb, a dogmatic, petulant, garrulous, capricious man who envisioned himself as a prophet. He was, in short, what Gibbon and his 18th-century contemporaries would have called an enthusiast—

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one who claimed to have a special political or religious insight denied to all others. His moods oscillated wildly from joy to depression, and he was continually obsessed with young women. His marriage to Euphemia Gray ended in a messy annulment on grounds of nonconsummation. His search for emotional security often bordered on the bizarre, as when, for example, he fell in love at 40 with the nine-year-old religious zealot, Rose La Touche, and considered marrying her. The painter John Millais said appropriately of him that he was "an undeniable giant as an author, but a poor weak creature in everything else."

His personal misfortunes aside, Ruskin was a prolific critic of both art and society. In such important works as *Modern Painters, The Seven Lamps of Architecture, The Stones of Venice, Sesame and Lilies, The Crown of Wild Olive, Fors Clavigera,* and *Praeterita,* as well as in many shorter pieces and lectures, he insisted that art must be moral and hence can only be produced by a moral society; evil men cannot create good art. A moral and just society, Ruskin asserted, must not waste its resources on industry and material pleasures, but instead it must use them to nurture and sustain the mind and the spirit. Later in his career Ruskin turned to social reform, arguing that national wealth is a treasure not to be squandered on selfish private interests but to be spent wisely on social justice and improvement. The businessman and the worker, he thought, should be as altruistic as doctors and clergymen since the real goal of wealth and work is to create happiness and virtue. He was deeply suspicious of a competitive economic system, preferring one in which fair working conditions and reward for craftsmanship were the norm. As he looked about him, he saw a civilization afflicted by the "curses of luxury and trade" compounded by a "want of integrity and simplicity" amid the "clotted and coagulated" cities of Victorian England. At one point Ruskin suggested that even art itself should be subordinated to the amelioration of the conditions of the poor. He strongly believed that human nature can be changed by education of the heart and head, that humane values must permeate business and industry, and that people will find happiness by disciplining their desire for luxury and by finding a zest for life in work which is both creative and satisfying. "It is not," he said, "that men are ill-fed, but that they have no pleasure in the work by which they make their bread, and therefore look to wealth as the only means of pleasure. It is not that men are pained by the scorn of the upper classes, but that they cannot endure their own; for they feel that the kind of labor to which they are condemned is verily a degrading one, and makes them feel less than men." And so, he believed, "A blacksmith may put soul into the making of a horseshoe, and an architect may put none into the building of a church."

By the end of his career Ruskin seemed to have given up on his countrymen. His final picture of them is not flattering, for he finds the average Briton to be nothing more than a "consumer of all things consumable, producer of nothing but darkness and abomination, with his foot on all that he once revered, his hope lost on all that he once worshipped, a god to himself, and to all the world an incarnate

In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles of Culture:*

The Conservative Id

"Sigmund Freud and Adam Smith had basically similar expectations of man's nature; however, they might have differed about the ultimate source of that nature. The psychoanalytic view *is* a conservative view. . . . when the left celebrates psychotherapy they are all quite aware that they are not praising psychoanalysis but specifically espousing the views of behaviorists and other utopians who believe human nature can be whatever a do-gooder wishes it to be, whatever a dreamer wishes to make it into."

—from an open letter to the editor by Richard Peters, Ed.D.

Also:

Opinions & Views—Commendables—In Focus
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Polemics & Exchanges

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calamity." In his frenetic enthusiasm Ruskin waged war against social and artistic apathy as well as irresponsible individualism; he championed unpopular causes, helped to found the Working Men's College, and endlessly expounded his ideas in print and from the lectern. Nevertheless he was his own man who tried to deliver a message which every society must hear if it is to survive. His personal eccentricities in no way invalidated what he had to say.

In an age such as our own, when intellectuals have lost their bearings, when religion has too often degenerated into cultism and success-worship, when education seems to be the province of the mediocre, and when political debate finds the single-issue demagogues too often overwhelming the rational and humane citizen, we, too, can wonder with Gibbon (and Ruskin) if indeed "a slow and secret poison" is seeping into the vitals of our civilization. □

The Debate on Strategy

***Common Security: A Blueprint for Survival;* Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues; Simon & Schuster; New York.**

Thomas H. Saffer and Orville E. Kelly: *Countdown Zero;* G. P. Putnam's Sons; New York.

by William R. Hawkins

For those concerned about the national security of the United States, the last two years have been most disturbing. In 1980, a President widely perceived as weak and indecisive, with a record of opposition to military preparedness, was defeated by a candidate who proposed to "make America great again." The Carter Administration had canceled the B-1 bomber, stalled the production of aircraft carriers and cruise missiles, agreed to the SALT II and Panama Canal treaties, and watched passively as the Soviets invaded Afghanistan and the Ayatollah Khomeini seized Iran. When President Reagan entered office he launched a rearmament program that concentrated on naval and nuclear weapons, pledged support for allies, and declared terrorism and Soviet aggression the central foreign-policy concerns. There was great optimism that the policies which had paralyzed U.S. policy during the 1970's would be reversed in the 1980's. The very specter of the Reagan Presidency was enough to end the Iranian hostage crisis on the day of his inauguration.

Yet, in 1982 the central issue has slipped from a desire to make America a power "second to none" to a discussion about which form of disarmament to adopt. The members of the Committee on the Present Danger seem to have had more influence on public opinion when they were writing articles as private citizens than they have had as officials of the new administration. The explosive growth of the peace movement gives testimony to the power of the left to dominate the media and to appeal to the most naive segments of Western society: the students and the clergy. This is not to say that there is no grain of truth on which the left builds. There is a feeling that a major war, with a high possibility of the use of nuclear weapons, is more probable now than in the past. This is true: the risk of war has increased as the balance of power has shifted from the United States, a status quo commercial republic, to the Soviet Union, an expansionist military empire. It was to reverse this shift that Reagan embarked on his rearmament program. The concern about war is valid; it is the proper response to it that is at issue.

The left has attempted to deflect concern from the Soviet threat while still playing on the fear of Soviet power in campaigns such as Ground Zero Week. Instead of the U.S.S.R., the danger is a neutered "arms race" which apparently exists outside of the realm of politics, ideology, or strategy. Thus the authors of *Common Security* can call themselves an "independent" commission. The prologue is by Cyrus Vance, Carter's first Secretary of State (the man who resigned his position over the Iranian rescue mission, not because it failed but because after six months Carter had dared to act at all). Vance argues that "On this issue [disarmament] there should be no division between right and left."

However, the commission is anything but independent or nonaligned. Its membership reads like a roll call of the Socialist International. Its chairman is Olof Palme, newly reinstated as the socialist premier of Sweden, a man who used to take time out from his assaults on the Swedish economy to march beside representatives of North Vietnam in anti-war protests. Palme pays tribute to Willy Brandt's independent commission on economic development for its help. Palme's commission was headquartered in Vienna, courtesy of the Austrian socialist leader Bruno Kreisky. Presumably to balance Vance, who is merely a liberal, Giorgi Arbatov of the Soviet Union's Institute of the U.S.A. and Canada also served. It is sad that no one on the commission knew the U.S.S.R. as well as Arbatov knows the West and its weaknesses.

As socialists, they focus much of their attention on economics. And, as with most socialists, their perspective of it is often bizarre. At one point, Rosa Luxemburg is quoted to refute Keynes, who is portrayed as a reactionary. The main thrust of *Common Security* is that defense spending diverts money from social programs. Repeatedly the commission calls for the transfer of defense money to the Third World for development, or toward welfare programs or environmental protection. This argument has a

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strong appeal, and not just for the left. Many a libertarian, though rejecting the spending of taxpayers' dollars for welfare or foreign aid, has been seduced into a disarmament position by the hope that a reduced defense budget means smaller tax bills. However, this argument rests on a dubious assumption: that military spending is inherently wasteful and that the military provides no benefits comparable to those gained from tax cuts or food stamps.

In reality, the military provides a service whose utility is unmatched: security. Its benefit: order amidst global anarchy. There is little in history to counter the impression that war is endemic to the international system. The commission itself admits that there have been over 120 conflicts since 1945. It does not matter whether one blames resource scarcity, crusading philosophies, or innate human aggressiveness. Variations on all of these themes are to be seen in the contemporary world.

The commission puts its trust in negotiations and in the United Nations. Yet for such solutions to be viable requires that the participants share compatible values and goals. A world populated with the likes of Castro, Khomeini, Arafat, and Khadafy, or one in which the Soviet Union vies for hegemony, hardly meets that requirement. Nothing sounds more utopian than the commission's call for all nations to "renounce the seeking of unilateral advantage" in their foreign and economic relations. This is tantamount to calling for the dissolution of the nation-state, since its raison d'être is the protection and promotion of the interests of one community against all rivals. And for the U.S. that national interest includes not just material prosperity but human freedom itself.

The commission tries, unconvincingly, to refute this traditional concern for national security so as to clear the way for its theory of common security. Repeatedly the report claims that "security cannot be attained through military superiority." Vance argues that "no nation can achieve true security by itself. . . . they can never guarantee their freedom from attack." In its most basic form, Vance's statement is correct. No nation can guarantee that it will not be attacked since that is a decision that rests with others. However, a nation can influence that decision by maintaining its strength so that any attacker is presented with the minimum chance of success. This is the

strategy of deterrence, backed, ideally, by the capability to repulse any attack.

The commission rejects deterrence as "inadequate" and in this its term is proper, but its analysis is faulty. Deterrence as it is defined in the West has become an excuse for passivity. Military strength is to be acquired, but never used. Indeed, to use it implies failure. However, security cannot be equated just with peace. As long as there are interests or values for which men will fight, there are interests and values deemed more important than peace. Security is properly identified with these interests and values, thus placing it above peace. Unfortunately, the doctrine of deterrence leaves this point uncovered and the question of what happens if deterrence fails unanswered. It is this flaw that the left exploits.

Advances in technology have made multiwarhead, intercontinental weapons highly accurate. First-strike tactics are now feasible, at least in theory. Precision attacks against military targets can reduce collateral damage to civilian targets without reducing the political benefits of victory. In fact, counterforce operations are more in the tradition of the unity of military force and political purpose than is the theory of mutual destruction.

The Soviet Union has understood this better than has the U.S. While Western intellectuals have questioned the utility of military force in the nuclear age, the Soviets and their clients have continued to apply Clausewitz's principles on a dozen battlefields. Soviet strategists early recognized the unprecedented range and power of nuclear weapons, but have still incorporated them into their thinking in a role equivalent to heavy artillery. From the start, military targets have been discussed as the targets for nuclear strikes rather than cities. This is in contrast to the American strategy of attacks on population and industrial centers. This divergence dates back to World War II, when the U.S. developed a strategic bombing force while the Soviets kept their air power for support at the battlefront. Since U.S. doctrine rejects the idea of a prolonged nuclear war, the justification for attacking cities has shifted to punishing aggression. The Soviets have kept their goal fixed on victory.

As Soviet capabilities have increased, the credibility, wisdom, and morality of the U.S. posture has declined. If American strategy does not adapt to the potential of the new weapons technology by modernizing both its arsenal and its doctrine, it will find its posture as outmoded as Battleship Row on the morning of the Pearl Harbor attack.

It is precisely this kind of adaptation that the commission wishes to prevent. Having built its case on the premise that national security is impossible, it wishes to keep the U.S. vulnerable. This is no more apparent than when its report states: "It is the ABM Treaty, above all, which prevents the illusion of a nuclear war with only minimal damage from gaining wider credibility." Wider credibility in the West, that is. A first-strike strategy does not require an ABM since its aim is to destroy enemy missiles before they can be launched. Even so, the

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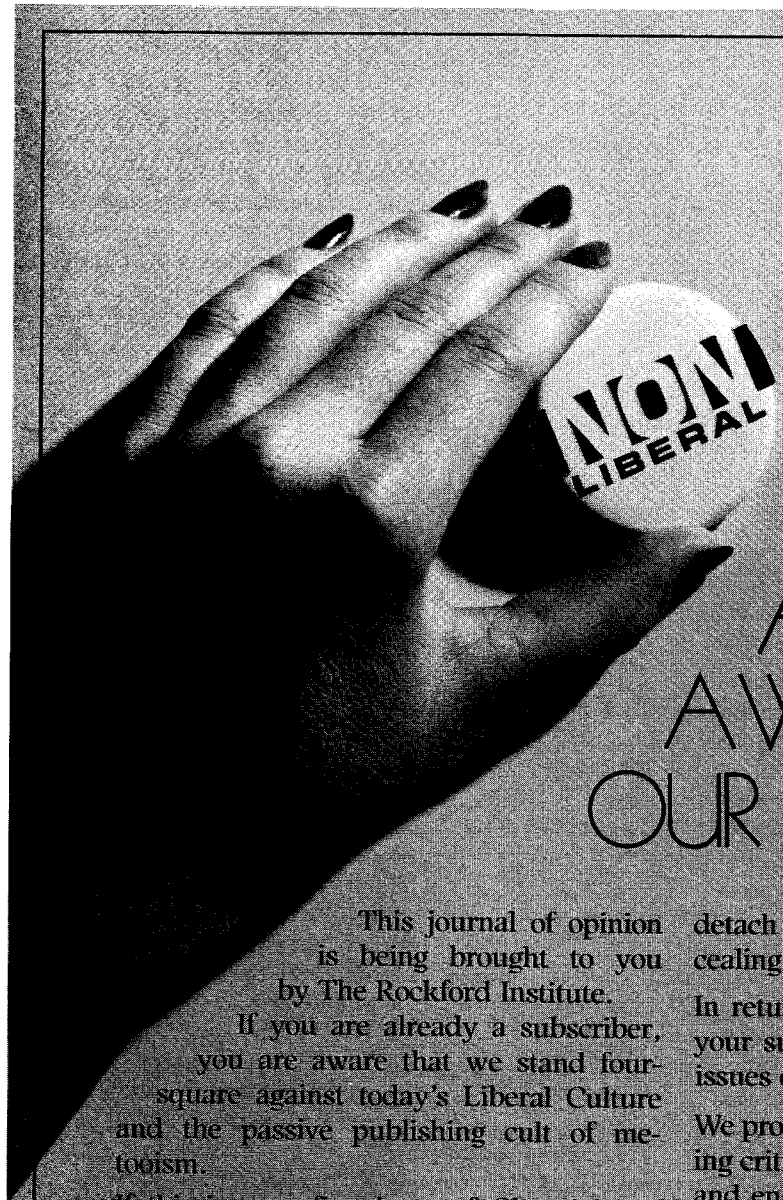

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LIBERAL CULTURE

Miss Grundy, the Brown Shirt

The work of one of the liberal culture's gurus, the late Mr. Roland Barthes, resolves a number of perplexing politico-linguistic conundrums. Said Barthes in a lecture at the Collège de France:

> Language is fascistic because the sentences are based on subordination: subject, predicate, direct and indirect object.

This, we presume, qualifies high school students enrolled in grammar classes as political prisoners and certifies the use of dangling modifiers as a heroic blow for democracy. □

Soviets have continued research on missile defense systems, including the use of particle-beam technology. For those truly concerned with the horrors of nuclear strikes, the potentials of antimissile systems should be very appealing. That the peace movement finds such systems alarming implies that it has a priority higher than the protection of several million lives.

Behind the debate on strategy is the realization—by both sides—that the old deterrence doctrine is dead. In truth, it probably never existed. The Soviet Union never accepted the idea of a "mutual suicide pact," nor did it have any compelling logic of its own. The peace was kept not by an arcane theory but by American military superiority. The ability of the U.S. to inflict devastation on the U.S.S.R. without suffering comparable damage itself (which was the condition of the balance of power through the 1950's and early 1960's) was a deterrent based on a war-fighting capability, even if it was not characterized as such at the time. It is the desire to prevent the restoration of this American superiority that motivates the international left.

This is the explanation for the timing of the peace movement's revival. The movement showed no interest in the Soviet development of first-strike weapons which started in the late 1960's with the SS-9. It remained quiet throughout the Soviet buildup of the 1970's. Only with the Reagan rearmament program did it spring to life. And it is only against the defense postures of the West that it will have any effect. So far, the right has not developed an adequate response.

The Reagan response, consisting of the START negotiations and the Zero Option, is the wrong response. As Norman Podhoretz observed in regard to Vietnam, once the issue became how best to withdraw, the war was lost. The same principle still applies. If the issue becomes how best to disarm, the left will set the agenda. Reagan will find himself vulnerable to the charge that he is not moving fast enough toward the goal of force reductions, when he should be moving in the opposite direction. Any short-term attempt to appease the peace movement will serve to undermine the argument for a long-term commitment to rebuild the nation's strength.

Despite its faulty logic and dangerous conclusions, *Common Security* can still be considered a serious book. No such claims can be made for *Countdown Zero*. *Countdown Zero* is a pure appeal to the emotions, and it's not even very persuasive on that level. A brief quotation from Stewart Udall's introduction serves to illustrate the tenor of the book: "This book is an indictment, an accusation lodged against the rash scientists and macho military men who ignored commonsense precautions in their headlong pursuit of military superiority."

The authors are two "atomic veterans," men who took part in above-ground nuclear tests in the 1950's. The purpose of the tests was to determine whether soldiers could survive on a battlefield where tactical nuclear weapons were being used. Given that the Soviets have integrated nuclear weapons into their blitzkrieg doctrine and have consistently assumed that a major war in Europe would employ the full range of weapons, it was vital that the military determine their effects. In this, the tests were successful.

Though the reader is supposed to recoil in horror at the mention of nuclear tests, the fact is that the authors survived multiple battlefield exposures to nuclear detonations. Saffer took part in the Hood test where a 77-kiloton device was detonated. A 77-kiloton warhead is five times the size of the one dropped on Hiroshima. The current MIRV warhead of a Minuteman III ICBM is 170 kilotons, while that of the Poseidon submarine-launched missile is only 40 kilotons. Saffer's shelter was a five-and-one-half-foot-deep trench, less elaborate than those used in World War I. After the blast, he and the other 2,300 men of his Marine brigade left the trench and advanced into the blast area—which was only three miles away. Reading Saffer's account makes the Soviet plan for sheltering their population from attack seem more realistic.

The authors use the book to draw attention to the alleged medical problems that the soldiers have suffered since the tests, supposedly due to long-term radiation damage. The validity of their claims is still under study, but one can sympathize with these men, as one would with any veteran who was injured in the line of duty—and there have been many. That wars cause death and destruction is hard-

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ly news, and no group is more aware of its cost than the professional soldiers whom Udall pillories. But that does not change the fact that national leaders must be prepared to deal with a dangerous world as it is. The problem posed by books like *Countdown Zero* is that they often affect the sensibilities of the general public without swaying a single aggressor from his path. □

Family as Joke or Isolation

John Barth: *Sabbatical;* G. P. Putnam's Sons; New York.

Anne Tyler: *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

by Betsy Clarke

More than anything, it seems, modern novelists want to present us with profound analyses of the American family, and more than anything we want to read them. But Kepone and the Central Intelligence Agency keep getting in the way. Remember Kepone? John Barth does. And Susan and Fenn, his central characters in *Sabbatical,* can't forget "runaway nuclear proliferation outside the Soviet bloc" and "dreadful governments in Brazil, El Salvador, Argentina, Chile, Guatemala . . ." Rapidly vanishing are the literary references with which an amateur might enrich his meditation on family and responsibility versus personal adventure and fulfillment. In their place is almost obsessive footnoting to the publications of Amnesty International and the alleged untruths of Henry Kissinger.

As one might suspect from the title, however, *Sabbatical* could hardly be described as a call to action. No, Fenn, a middle-aged stool pigeon, and Susan, his young wife of seven years, are responding to these world crises in the typical way of liberals: yachting and shooting the breeze. Not that conscience doesn't nag. "In her [Susan's] opinion we should be laying siege to the State Department's Chilean desk, for example, instead of idling up Chesapeake Bay," Fenn explains earnestly. So who's stopping them?

Sabbatical typifies the disturbing trend of Barth-style novelists toward substituting political statements for such obsolete elements of fiction as character development, plot, and perception. As if to counter any anticipated criticism of their work on the basis of this replacement, those novelists seem to be saying, "This book may be a dog, but at least my heart's in the right place." And in fact such defensiveness may be effective. While this and similar novels have suffered unflattering remarks by reviewers, when the thoroughly abominable quality of such fiction is considered, the criticism is preposterously mild. Authors like Barth must use such ideological decoys because they have no idea about how to approach their chosen subject without offending the members of the special-interest groups most likely to await their work. What, after all, *is* the liberal's disposition toward the traditional family? Feminists find it patriarchal and oppressive. Homosexuals find it superfluous, even revolting. Most, according to current wisdom, find it interesting for a while, but ultimately stultifying and dull. Many liberals approach even a simple definition of the term with fear and dread.

Wishing to receive credit for taking on serious matters while avoiding anything of real substance, Barth has decided to view the contemporary family as a joke, tackling it with an overstylized narrative and a comic tone. Like John Irving, he peoples a dangerous world with goofy characters who indulge in eccentric actions and are victimized by bizarre circumstances. His protagonists are inevitably selfish, over-educated, and pampered; all of them make one wonder why nuclear-freeze proponents mourn the possible destruction of the human race. "I wished I had more character, or, lacking that, more talent," said Fenn of his youth. A little bit of either would have been a vast improvement. But don't be fooled. *Sabbatical,* Fenn's look at his life today, is the work of an author who is convinced of his moral and intellectual superiority.

The insufferable Susan and Fenn are taking time off from teaching and writing to bum around the Caribbean on their 33-foot sailboat and think through their lives. Despite her poor grammar and basement I.Q. ("You undermine every government that puts their

Miss Clarke is a frequent contributor to the Chronicles.

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people's welfare above Exxon's and I T and T's and Anaconda Copper's," she says of her ex-CIA agent husband), Susan has accepted a teaching position at Swarthmore. Fenn, already the author of a CIA exposé, is thinking of letting his wife support him while he writes, unremarkably, a novel.

More bad news: both Susan and Fenn have doubles. Susan's twin, Miriam, once gang-raped and worked over by SAVAK, is currently involved with a Vietnamese immigrant, Eastwood Ho, by whom she has a son, Edgar Allan Ho. This is evidence of Barth's top-notch wit. Susan's and Miriam's mother, a successful entrepreneur, is "kerflooey," in the language of this novel. Other stylistic contrivances, such as "Blam! Blooey!" to describe the noise of a sea storm, and upside-down exclamation points give the novel all the literary integrity of a chain letter. Fenn's twin Manfred, a CIA operative, is presumed dead.

During their journey there are dreams, uncharted islands, gunfire, and a sea monster with which to contend. There are storms to survive and political discussions to endure. But what the heck? Life ain't all bad: "We are reasonably healthy, reasonably successful, reasonably well off, well fed, well screwed, unpersecuted, unoppressed, and still in love after seven years of marriage: the favored of the earth," Fenn muses smugly. Now if either of them could sustain a serious thought for more than 25 seconds, they would really have the world on a silver platter. But rationality seems not to be a part of their value systems. In the end, Fenn and Susan gain —what else?—a new perspective on their lives, and Fenn, Barth's alter ego, is threatening us with another work of fiction. *Sabbatical* was a start, but the author isn't getting any younger. Perhaps his next project will have a little more permanence. How about *Retirement?*

One author who should never retire is Anne Tyler, whose *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* provides a rich story of ordinary people wrestling with the combination of familiarity and isolation that characterizes family living. It is skillfully written, certainly credible, always interesting. But it is also almost oppressively sad.

No "quality-of-life" types opting for a year of luxury to ponder the immorality of U.S. human-rights policy here. Tyler's characters are human beings who worry about mundane matters like finances, their health, and their children's behavior. Pearl Tull suffers and rages after husband Beck leaves her and the three children, never to return in her lifetime. Her offspring, Cody, Ezra, and Jenny, mean everything to her, and yet she is prone to violent abuse and unforgivably cruel outbursts. Though she works in a grocery store, her role in the traditional family skit "The Mortgage Overdue" belies a waste of talent and fury. Happiness, something she projects upon photographs and recollections of the past, is never realized.

The many rituals, traditions, affections, and rivalries of family life are well chronicled here. Cody, though better looking, smarter, and more driven than Ezra, seethes with envy over his younger brother's good heart and eventually steals his fiancée. Jenny achieves her goal of becoming a pediatrician but creates and leaves new family situations without the proper reflection. It is Ezra, though, whose restaurant bestows upon the book its title and who gives this fine novel its focus. Disappointing his mother, who wishes him to finish college and pursue an academic career, Ezra, a bachelor, remolds a successful Italian restaurant into his fantasy of homey nourishment where "everything will be solid and wholesome, really homelike." Ezra's idea, of course, when put into operation, never equals his dream. There is chaos in the kitchen and some trouble keeping help. "Well, I don't know," muses a skeptical Jenny. "Maybe people go to restaurants to get *away* from home." Indeed, dinners at The Homesick Restaurant are—in repeated episodes that are too contrived—unmitigated disasters. What remains of the Tull household seems unable to meet there to celebrate even an occasion of joy without splitting up before the main course is served.

Nor does the outside world provide any better examples of family harmony. Strangers pour out their unhappiness on radio call-in shows. Pearl's grandson Luke, hitchhiking away from his parents, accepts rides from a grieving father, a divorced man looking for new love, and a mother distraught at the unbridgeable rift between herself and her husband and daughter. The only happiness the characters detect is that which they have superimposed on smiling, anonymous faces.

Successful family life is frequently elusive, and the reader is often moved by Ezra's symbolic, culinary oblations to it. Statistics show that many households are troubled: alcoholism, desertion, domestic violence are all too common. What is not being said often enough, however, is that such families are in the minority. The "broken home" is still the exception rather than the rule; most marriages endure until the death of a spouse. Surely the family harmony and unity for which the Tulls strain so valiantly are not completely unobtainable fantasies. Many people find security and pleasure

> "Tyler's prose is sexually anesthetized—in fact, mass sexual coma prevails in her books—and so the energy it gives off feels fabricated. The warmth is shallow; it is nostalgia being burned, not immediate experience. . . . She allows the middle-brow middle class to love itself for all its poignant insufficiency. A pity . . ."
>
> —Vivian Gornick
> *Village Voice* review
> entitled "Anne Tyler's
> Arrested Development"

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after entering into the traditional family bonds.

Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant is therefore an exceptional effort with memorable characters in highly believable circumstances. The novel is not without humor, though more of it is at the characters' expense than for their enjoyment. Still, the book seems not entirely fair. Though devoid of the ideological rhetoric and the self-pity that pervade so much contemporary fiction, it nevertheless succumbs to the trendy belief that life, on the whole, is a pretty unhappy business and that the family, through inherent human imperfection, is fatally flawed. Sadder still is the fact that the author, a married woman with two children, should feel the need to portray it as such. □

Insights into Long-Forgotten Inbroglios

Bruce Allen Murphy: *The Brandeis/Frankfurter Connection;* Oxford University Press; New York.

Jordan A. Schwarz: *The Speculator: Bernard M. Baruch in Washington, 1917–1965;* University of North Carolina Press; Chapel Hill.

by Henry L. Mason III

Both these books describe the political activities of legendary men, cover approximately the same time period, and recount several of the same events. There, however, the similarity ends; Murphy has turned inherently interesting material into mush, while Schwarz has taken a potentially tedious subject and made it glitter.

The Brandeis/Frankfurter Connection should embarrass both its author and its publisher; it is well that the intellectual reputation of the Oxford University Press does not depend solely on its editorship of this book. Murphy tramples the most elementary principles of historical scholarship, uses source material in a way which is at best unorthodox, and writes in a remarkably soggy style for which *lumpenjournalistic* is the most accurate adjective I can contrive. It is characteristic that neither Murphy nor his six editorial colleagues and "copy-readers" can even *spell* the word "subtly." The heart of Murphy's book is his claim to evaluate "over three hundred" letters written by Justice Louis Brandeis "during the thirties" to Felix Frankfurter, then a professor at the Harvard Law School. These "personal missives," it is alleged, were "kept from public view" by Frankfurter until his death and now constitute "an important key to understanding the political relationship between the justice and Frankfurter and in [sic] describing, in full detail, the true extent of Brandeis's extrajudicial activities during the New Deal." The rest of the book amounts to a further description of Brandeis's and Frankfurter's political activities; Murphy employs a relentlessly gushing "now-it-can-be-told" manner but succeeds, if anything, in subtracting from the sum of human knowledge about both men. When an author repeatedly asserts that previously "unpublished" and "very revealing" correspondence has produced "new evidence" which allows a "fuller story" to be told, it behooves him to at least describe, preferably consistently, the correspondence to which he refers. Murphy fails this elementary test. He tells us, for example:

1. That the number of previously unpublished letters is "over" three hundred. Yet on the back cover of the book jacket the Oxford University Press asserts that the number is exactly three hundred;

2. That the letters were written "during the thirties" and that the "first" such letter was written on April 16, 1930. But Murphy repeatedly implies—for example in his discussion of the Sacco-Vanzetti case—that letters from a far earlier period were among those allegedly concealed;

3. That the letters involved "can be found in boxes 27, 28 and 29" of the Felix Frankfurter papers in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress. To the extent that this statement is meant to imply that these boxes contain nothing but concealed correspondence it is false; many of the letters in the three boxes predate "the thirties" and at least some have been published before.

Murphy also goes out of his way to tell us that the suppressed letters were sent *by* Brandeis *to* Frankfurter. Yet he also cites letters from the same boxes going *from* Frankfurter *to* Brandeis, and it would in fact be surprising if only one side of a bilateral correspondence were "kept from public view." The result of these obscurities is that even the most patient footnote-juggling reader cannot begin to determine *which* Brandeis-Frankfurter letters the author claims to be "new." This is important because most of the book is a rehash of matters which have been discussed with greater accuracy elsewhere. And when the reader also realizes that *none* of the previously unpublished letters seem to be quoted in their entirety, and that crucial words are frequently supplied in brackets *by Murphy,* it is not amiss to take a closer look at how Murphy uses his sources.

A revealing example is found in a 1943 episode at the War Production Board, where Murphy turns a routine bureaucratic power struggle in Byzantium-on-the-Potomac into a threatened military putsch foiled only by "the political infighting skills of Justice Frankfurter." Interestingly, the episode also

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involved Bernard Baruch and is discussed in Schwarz's biography far more fully than it is by Murphy. The War Production Board was headed by Donald Nelson, who was regarded by Frankfurter—and others—as indecisive and inept. According to Murphy (who cites no source whatever), by 1943 Frankfurter had "become preoccupied with a secret fear that the military might be maneuvering to take complete control of the decision-making process." Again according to Murphy, "the military," represented by Assistant Secretary of War Robert Patterson and Assistant Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal, "plotted to have . . . Nelson replaced by Baruch." The reason for this alleged "plot" was not so much that Baruch was himself a puppet of the military, but that he was then 73 years old and would supposedly rely largely on an assistant named Eberstadt "who had been placed on the Board by Patterson and Forrestal." Eberstadt seems to have been an earlier and more intelligent version of Haldeman and Ehrlichman; he was frequently described by contemporaries as a brilliant but ruthless "Prussian." As Murphy tells the story, this "plot" was forestalled at the last moment. Milton Katz, a former Frankfurter student who was then serving as solicitor to the War Production Board, supposedly kept Frankfurter apprised of the situation at the WPB. When Frankfurter also learned "that an executive order firing Nelson and replacing him with Baruch had been prepared and was sitting on the president's desk waiting for his signature," Frankfurter arranged for the information to be passed on to Katz who, in a "pre-dawn" meeting, advised Nelson to fire Eberstadt before Nelson was fired himself. It's asserted that since the only purpose in substituting Baruch for Nelson was Baruch's anticipated reliance on Eberstadt, the "American tradition . . . of having civilians exercise control over the military" was heroically preserved.

Nonsense. In the first place, it is immediately apparent that the true hero of Murphy's version is not so much Frankfurter as Milton Katz; it is not surprising to learn that "the basis for the entire account of this incident [is] drawn from an interview with Milton Katz, August 3, 1979." (Katz, an eminent scholar and gentleman now in his seventies, can hardly be blamed for romantically exaggerating his importance to the Republic 36 years previously.) Even more important, Murphy has totally disregarded (1) Frankfurter's contemporaneous evaluation of Patterson as "a complete innocent" (hardly an apt description of a "plotter"); (2) Frankfurter's statement in his diary that Nelson's decision to get rid of Eberstadt was made at least a week prior to the firing and *not* the night before; (3) the likelihood that it was not Katz but Wayne Coy, Assistant Director of the Bureau of the Budget, who persuaded Nelson to fire Eberstadt; (4) the fact (which shortly became apparent to James Byrnes, among others) that Roosevelt did not want to appoint Baruch to the WPB and that Baruch did not want the job; (5) the fact that the pressure to appoint Baruch did not cease when Eberstadt was fired and (6) the fact that, far from being some kind of military coup d'etat, the "imbroglio" at the WPB was described by Frankfurter himself as nothing more than "the usual tug of war for power."* After all this, it is hardly surprising that Murphy fails to give us Eberstadt's correct first name ("Ferdinand" and not "Fred"), and that his account of a Frankfurter dinner on January 4, 1943 has only the most superficial and misleading resemblance to the Frankfurter diary account which is cited as Murphy's only source. Yet the Oxford University Press describes *The Brandeis/Frankfurter Connection* as "unerringly documented."

From Murphy it is a relief to turn to a biographer who knows his business. Schwarz's fascinating account of Bernard Baruch's career includes numerous vignettes on things ranging from the American search for nitrates in 1917–1918 to Baruch's "almost evangelical enthusiasm" for the "liberty shoe" in 1942. Even more to the point, Schwarz explains superbly the effect of war and economic crisis on the conflicting political philosophies which have clashed in this country for much of the 20th century; in one vivid paragraph he gives a better picture of Washington bureaucracy in World War II than pages and pages of Murphy's meanderings:

> Civilian wartime administrators suspected army supply chiefs of plotting a coup d'etat against democratic processes. New Dealers were certain that big businessmen were intent upon eliminating smaller competition. Businessmen believed that liberals sought to carry on their social crusades besides fighting the Nazis and the Japanese. Sometimes the political conflicts were predicated upon personality, civilian occupation, or class background. To begin with, wartime administrators often characterized each other with words like 'ruthless' and 'ambitious' because so many of them were ruthless and ambitious to win power in the war setup. But that was nothing new in the bureaucracies of government, business or academe whence they came. Career government officials tended to disparage the abilities of businessmen who wandered through their bailiwicks during the emergency. Academics, mostly economists, agreed that businessmen usually brought a narrow focus into government. Even lawyers sneered at businessmen. Some discerning observers realized that not all businessmen could be lumped together and began distinguishing between 'production men' from the corporate world and 'bankers' from Wall Street. Finally, even the old school tie mattered in making alignments. Princeton and Yale men dominated the War Department leadership and obviously felt quite comfortable with one another. Most were either Wall Street brokers or lawyers who moved easily in financial circles. They tried

*See Lash, *From the Diaries of Felix Frankfurter,* pp. 166, 167, 178, 185-192.

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not to discriminate along such lines, but a man from Cornell was easier to respect than one from the University of Missouri.

As the continuing pertinence of the preceding paragraph makes clear, Schwarz's book provides valuable insights into long-forgotten controversies which have largely shaped our current situation; in his account of the Eberstadt affair, for example, Schwarz gives a much more coherent picture of the different political and economic views of the contestants than does Murphy, whose knowledge of political economy is, at best, wanting. □

Modern Stoicism & Useless Sadness

Dan Wakefield: *Under the Apple Tree;* Delacorte Press; New York.

Robert McCrum: *A Loss of Heart;* Viking Press; New York.

by Gregory Wolfe

Under the Apple Tree is a tale about a small Midwestern town during World War II; *A Loss of Heart* is concerned with contemporary British radicalism. On the surface, the books are disparate. A unity, however, becomes apparent: both novels attempt to depict the state of the nation through particular characters and events; by looking through the small lens they intend to provide a telescopic view of national history. A second puzzle emerges in focusing on Dan Wakefield. He is a sometime contributing editor of *Atlantic Monthly* whose novel *Starting Over* followed the best-seller/hit-movie route a few years ago. *Starting Over* is a "comic" novel which must have struck the American reading public in just the right way: it traces the myriad one-, two-, and three-night stands of a recently divorced man who really *needs* the company of women. Wakefield's combination of sex and Woody Allen-style comedy about trendy hang-ups guaranteed its success in a culture that prefers to see the funny side of the modern behavioral morass.

Under the Apple Tree seems almost to be written by a different author. A quieter, more serious novel about a small Illinois town during World War II, this book is also funny, but its social criticism and irony are more subtle and restrained. The author keeps to the background in this one. What ultimately links the two Wakefield novels is what one dust-jacket commentator called Wakefield's "stoic sense of the human condition." This modern stoicism, which does have a certain appeal, is reminiscent of its philosophical predecessor. However, though it appears to have noble qualities, it lacks the transcendent, redemptory vision which is the ultimate source of philosophical satisfaction. Stoicism can be another word for moral blindness.

Wakefield's protagonist is 10-year-old Artie Garber, and in Artie's development we are meant to see not only his loss of innocence, but that of the whole nation as well. Evidently both Artie and America have a lot of growing up to do. Wakefield does evoke the small town well: for Artie, Birney, Illinois is the center of the known universe, and the richness and plentitude of the American plains that he senses taps into the tradition of America as the Eden of innocence. The sensuousness of the land is reflected in Artie's big brother Roy, whom Artie idolizes. Roy is a physical youth who, not surprisingly, quits school to join the Marines at the outbreak of the war, which serves to increase the admiration Artie and others in Birney have for him. Roy's physicality, however, is tainted with aimlessness and violence; his real motives for enlisting involve escaping his high school academic failure. The community isn't concerned with Roy's motives; it treats him like a glorified football hero. Here enters the double standard, the well-meaning hypocrisy that Wakefield wants readers to see as a state of mind ripe for a rude awakening.

Artie's preoccupation with the war, his dutiful work on the home front, his attitude toward the enemy ("And we'll slap the Jap right off the map!!"), are of a piece with the insular mentality of the Americans who see the war as an extension of the high school football game. The war drags on, and Artie, along with the rest of the country, gets bored with it; they are, in war-propaganda terms, "slacking off." The air of unreality is reinforced by Wakefield's frequent use of popular song lyrics, many of which act as a balm or sedative on a collective national mind unable to understand what the war is all about.

That question of understanding seems important. The American soldiers in the Korean War who broke under communist interrogation in POW camps succumbed because they couldn't say what America "stood for." With the Vietnam War and the 60's, the crisis of citizenship became an established fact of American life. All the characters in *Under the Apple Tree* talk about America "making the world safe for democracy." Wakefield probably intends us to see this as part of a national complacence, but it could also be seen as the kind of vacuous, messianic phrase which Woodrow Wilson and the liberal mind bequeathed to posterity. It was liberalism, not conservatism or "capitalism," which carried the vision of America's "Manifest Destiny" and saw the rest of the world as a barbaric frontier in need of the Fourteen Points of peace. However, it seems that Wakefield has

" 'Under the Apple Tree'. . . [is] a palpable and charming mix of seriousness and entertainment."

—*New York Times Book Review*

Mr. Wolfe writes from Oxford, England.

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allowed an anachronism, a modern war-has-no-meaning bias, to slip into his picture, which ultimately makes the novel problematic.

Some conservative publicists have developed a concept which they call the "Hive." It might also be called the antithesis of the conspiracy theory. "Hive" means the community of journalists, politicians, intellectuals, and activists who, working independently of each other, all contribute to the goals of liberalism and socialism. The Hive operates largely by fashionable concurrence: for example, if the ACLU brings a suit in court challenging some traditional idea, the *New York Times* will report it in a favorable light, even though it is not working directly with the ACLU. The Hive knows its own and protects them. The Hive concept can be carried further. The preconceptions of the liberal/socialist mind tend to run along fairly conventional lines; there is a Hive language, if you will. Robert McCrum's *A Loss of Heart* is a Hive novel. Ostensibly a work of the imagination, it reads with the dull predictability of a menu in Howard Johnson's.

McCrum is of a type not unknown in the decaying socialist state of Britain; he is, so to speak, an Angry Young Man. "For God's sake, look to the state of England," his epigraph cries, quoted from a chronicle of the reign of King John in order to emphasize the impending anarchy. It is one of the crowning ironies of our time that a young man like McCrum can be educated by a dying, socialist intellectual world, react against the claustrophobia and grittiness of the welfare state—and blame it all on capitalism. One way to look at *A Loss of Heart* is by comparing it to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness;* the vague similarity of the titles is not coincidence. In *Heart of Darkness,* an average European man goes in search of a brilliant Renaissance man who has entered the savage heart of Africa and merged with it, only to find a truth too horrible to live with. *A Loss of Heart* traces the search of Philip Taylor, an average professor, for his radical brother Daniel. Though he dies near the beginning of the novel, Daniel's spirit presides over the book, and it is this spirit which Philip seeks to understand. The Taylor brothers are heirs to the family pharmaceutical company, founded in the 18th century by their Quaker ancestors and grown into a multinational corporation. Both sons refuse to take over the failing company from their imperious father. But Daniel discovers on a trip to Africa that his father's firm is guilty of dumping dangerous drugs on the native market to make a profit. Wracked by guilt feelings inherited from the Quakers, and frustrated by his inability to effect change, he turns to violence by aiding terrorists, only to die of drink and self-neglect at 35, a prematurely old man. The discovery of Daniel's fate is important for what it tells Philip about himself. In Philip Taylor, McCrum provides a protagonist (I can't say hero) who makes J. Alfred Prufrock look like Prometheus Bound. Typical of the state of Britain, McCrum says, is this shy, insecure professor who withdraws from the world and has no idea of the pounding heart of agony and frustration which lies beneath the placid surface of British society. The pain of the African mothers who bear deformed children as a result of the family pharmaceuticals and the pain of the downtrodden working class has become one, and it exists in Britain as much as it does in Africa. The novel ends as Philip, together with Daniel's girl friend, are taken hostage by the terrorist they meant to help. The bullet that enters Philip's head cuts short what appeared to be a new and more meaningful life. Again, one can hear McCrum saying between the lines: "See? It's almost too late. If you don't look to the state of Britain now this violence will overwhelm you, and you will have only yourselves to blame!"

The artist has a responsibility to cut across the grain of his society's ephemeral but cherished opinions. It is this quality which makes Dostoevski's Grand Inquisitor or Flannery O'Connor's Misfit speak with the voice of prophecy; they strike at the root of the age's vanities. McCrum presents a standard cast of characters: the puritanical and hypocritical father who cannot handle the family's business and rages at his sons for not taking it over; an aging journalist who travels in the ruins of the British Empire, writing about it but not understanding it, willing to make deals which affect adversely thousands of African lives because "that's the way the world works"; a tough, masculine woman who is committed to socialism and whose independence stirs the heart of the weak-kneed professor, Philip Taylor. Robert McCrum's *A Loss of Heart* is a dangerous and saddening phenomenon: it is a justification of violence based on a perverted idea of the causes of the economic sicknesses of our society. As a Hive novel, it takes a socialist viewpoint for granted. Unfortunately, too many people will grant McCrum's premise. □

In the Mail

The Church and the Sword **by G. Russell Evans and C. Gregg Singer; St. Thomas Press; Houston, TX.** An examination of what some American churches are doing with regard to defending the nation and some suggestions for what they ought to be doing and why.

Conflict Quarterly **by the Centre for Conflict Studies; University of New Brunswick; Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada.** The Spring-Summer issue of this quarterly contains essays on subjects from the Parti Quebecois to the war in El Salvador.

Man as DNA **by Earl Hubbard; Philosophical Library; New York.** In 12 essays the author puts forth the proposition that man is the DNA—the plan—that will play a key role in the evolution of the solar system.

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Rationalizing Drift

Jeane J. Kirkpatrick: *Dictatorships and Double Standards: Rationalism and Reason In Politics;* American Enterprise Institute / Simon & Schuster; New York.

by Edward J. Lynch

Mrs. Kirkpatrick has assembled a remarkable volume that ranges far beyond international relations. The subtitle, "Rationalism and Reason in Politics," provides an accurate indication of its scope. Although presented as a collection of essays, the volume is truly a book, complete with a tightly argued, unifying theme. The individual essays are well done, with the author reaching judicious conclusions meriting consideration; the underlying theme is troublesome. One can admire the destination she reaches even if one has reservations about the methods she uses to arrive at it.

The basic thrust of her volume is hardly novel. Michael Oakeshott, a British political philosopher, developed the core idea nearly 50 years ago. Rationalism views the world in terms of abstract principles, including an overarching vision of utopia. These principles serve as the main criteria by which all political actions are evaluated. Often humorless, rationalists are unceasing critics of the status quo, always discovering ways in which the most fortuitous developments fall short of ideal. Among the political thinkers commonly lumped into the "rationalist" category are Plato, Rousseau, Marx, and Hitler—the wide variations in their "ideals" notwithstanding.

Mrs. Kirkpatrick's notion of political reason begins with her observation of these diverse political ideals. Following Aristotle's criticism of Plato's *Republic,* she contends that such views make interesting reading but are disastrous in application. They invariably rely upon a complete transformation of human character—Plato's race of philosopher-kings, Marx's "new socialist man," Hitler's "Aryan"—through means that are radically severed from all existing human institutions and history.

Disciples of history at their best follow the example of Publius in *The Federalist.* Eschewing any radical transformation of human character, builders of reasoned policies and reasonable societies accept human beings as they are and then design measures and institutions that incorporate means of balancing those deficiencies. For Mrs. Kirkpatrick, *The Federalist* is an essay that recognizes the failings of previous democracies and attempts to add corrective mechanisms so that the republic defended by Publius would provide a better example for practical human conduct than the one designed by Plato.

For Mrs. Kirkpatrick, the attempt to address theoretical questions through politics is the cause of many of today's ills. For instance, former-President Carter's notion of human-rights policy was stridently opposed to friendly regimes in Nicaragua and Iran, ignoring the potential of those societies to develop liberal democratic arrangements. The McGovern-Fraser party reforms "opened" party mechanisms to greater involvement, without adequate attention to the consequences of that "involvement" for the existing partisan, electoral, and governmental arrangements. The single-minded pursuit of "equality" on the part of the American left, or "liberty" by American libertarians, tends to work for the destruction of the careful balance of liberty and equality that Mrs. Kirkpatrick believes essential to maximize both values. Mrs. Kirkpatrick is a sort of political physicist observing the people and "forces" moving hither and yon. She has a feel for the "center" of American politics, and she provides a catalog of people, each devoted to some single principle, who can be found on the extremes. *She* prefers the "center." She recognizes the importance of moral education—the formation of the character of future generations—to any society that hopes to endure. For these times, she believes that the development of practical reason, on the basis of a model such as her reading of *The Federalist,* offers a better path toward the political moderation that she favors than any alternative form of education. Unfortunately, Mrs. Kirkpatrick's concern for balance and moderation have turned her attention away from the *goals* of politics. She is correct when she observes: "Political regimes exist through the values, beliefs, and habits of their citizens; regimes persist only as long as appropriate values, beliefs, and habits endure." Democracy, faced with its ultimate tests, must include a consensus that ballots are the most suitable means with which to resolve political conflicts. Mrs. Kirkpatrick is profoundly wrong if she believes that *The Federalist* defended democracy as an end in itself, in effect embracing a pluralism of any and all values as America's civil religion.

Mrs. Kirkpatrick appears to have learned a great deal from the late Martin Diamond, but she has overlooked his vital comments on this notion of pluralism. Diamond had learned from *The Federalist* that pluralism—the receptiveness to tolerance and compromise on many questions—required some more-fundamental consensus, i.e., unity, on deeper underlying questions. Diamond knew that *The Federalist* could speak freely about a multiplicity of sects in reli-

"Here we have a clue to Mrs. Kirkpatrick's ideological blinders."
—*New York Times Book Review*

Dr. Lynch is a frequent contributor to the Chronicles.

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gion and interests in other dimensions because the American people at the time shared an unquestioned adherence to the self-evident truths of the Declaration of Independence. Mrs. Kirkpatrick's ability to write an essay on *The Federalist* without reference to the Declaration is merely another indication of how the politics of compromise and moderation in contemporary America have become divorced from the common roots—that is, "abstract" truth—that might provide a basis for compromise. Following many writers of the self-identified political "center," Mrs. Kirkpatrick uses the terms "interest" and "faction" interchangeably. For Publius, the terms were carefully distinguished: "factions" were a subcategory of interests because they operated "adverse[ly] to the rights of other citizens or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community." A society can tolerate an infinite variety of legitimate interests. A society that would preserve equality and liberty cannot engage in compromises that seek to balance its fundamental values with their perversions.

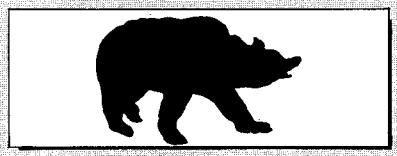
Let's apply this "abstract" truth to a couple of contemporary examples. The Declaration is a well-ordered document. It recognizes that life is a precondition to the exercise of liberty or the pursuit of happiness. Unless the right to life is secured equally for all, it is endangered for all. In Publius's terms, the people who organized to safeguard the inalienable right to life represent a legitimate interest. Those who wish to promote death must be regulated carefully to insure that the direction of their concern is lawful—e.g., the death of criminals convicted of heinous crimes—rather than factiously directed toward the death of innocents. In contrast, Mrs. Kirkpatrick likes to play balancing games that enable one to reach conclusions without affirming the principles that settle them. In the case of affirmative action, for example, she treats government policy, admittedly flawed, as an effort to balance competing claims of people to scarce resources. This technique enables her to construct a middle ground that avoids the extremes of excessive emphasis on either liberty (which results in discrimination) or equality (which results in rigid quota systems). Publius might have resolved this clash by examining the principle of affirmative action and comparing it to the equality principle of the Declaration. The Declaration's equality is an equality of creation. Affirmative action's principle is an idea that various "ends" in society—including jobs, training programs, school admissions, etc.—should be made "equal." The establishment of any notion of "equal" ends must stand the equality principle of the Declaration on its head. The inversion of that principle is spurious in and of itself, and any conflict with liberty that results only provides additional grounds for rejecting it. By utilizing Publius's terms, we can avoid the discussion of extremes of left or right that we want to balance on some middle ground. In fact, the notion of extremism is a straw man in such cases, and our "practical" political leaders are discovering repeatedly that the middle ground they seek is made of quicksand. American politics today cannot be understood fully if, like Mrs. Kirkpatrick, we cling to the belief that a social consensus on fundamental values remains beneath our politics. Whether we examine issues of foreign policy, economic policy, or domestic social policy, the polarization of contemporary American politics is the surface reflection of the dissolution of our once-common ground. Mrs. Kirkpatrick does not mention abortion directly, but she should have little difficulty recognizing that there is no middle ground between life and death.

Although Mrs. Kirkpatrick favors moral education that will enable our institutions to survive, one will search her work in vain for a convincing rationale for this preference. She has rejected the notion that the practice of our institutions rests on very profound abstract truths. That one as brilliant as she could remain impervious to this lesson is a profoundly disturbing comment on our educational system. The essays effectively endorse political drift with no underlying sense of direction. This rationalization of drift demonstrates the depth of the contemporary challenge to America's experiment with a democracy committed to both equality and liberty. One cannot be excessively optimistic about the nation's chances when even its brightest politicians fail to comprehend the depth of the challenge. □

LIBERAL CULTURE

Sophistry at Princeton

The Nation has decided to explain the Soviet-American entanglement to its readers. For this purpose, it hired a Princeton professor, one Stephen F. Cohen. *The Nation's* passion for the Soviet Union is reminiscent of that of Chevalier des Grieux for Manon Lescaut, and Professor Cohen approached his task in the same manner. He explained that Soviet leadership consists of two factions: bad guys and very bad guys; thus it's best for America to give to the just-bad ones everything they wish, so the very bad ones will be kept at bay. In the meantime, he called the goings-on in Afghanistan a "border crisis." Predictably, the



worst bad guy in the game, according to Prof. Cohen, is President Reagan.

> Reagan's crusade 'to prevail' on the pipeline issue abets the political fortunes of the most xenophobic, militaristic, pogrom-minded forces in Soviet politics.

What Mr. Cohen perpetrates for the sake of *The Nation's* consuming love turns Abbe Prévost's portraits of amatory ardors into a Sadean exercise. □

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Some Bathos & An Apotheosis of Immaturity

Christopher Hope: *A Separate Development;* Charles Scribner's Sons; New York.

Doris Lessing: *The Making of the Representative For Planet 8;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

by Maura A. Daly

Doris Lessing's most recent novel and Christopher Hope's first novel are divergent reflections on one particularly modern literary topos: the difficulty of the individual's defining himself in relation to society. This involves another traditional literary subject, the displacement and consequent transformation of the individual. These motifs are, in turn, related to the sempiternal philosophical conundrum regarding the perennial confusion between appearance and reality. In neither book, however, are these topoi fully or even partially developed. The authors fail to come to grips with these questions on anything but the most superficial level. This superficiality results from the evasion of responsibility which permeates both books. In these novels, the societies and individuals are incorrigibly irresponsible when they face philosophical issues—a defect that they seem to have contracted from the authors themselves. What is the nature of this irresponsibility? The nature of the fault is that Mr. Hope wants, at all costs, to satirize, and Miss Lessing to transcend everything. These alone are hardly hanging faults and are certainly the authors' prerogatives, but what is more serious is the fact that these tendencies toward pseudotranscendence and the glorification of the pseudoheroic are really recipes for proving whatever vague, philosophical, unfounded argument one wishes, for supporting whatever chic pose suits one's fancy. Finally, these stances are simply excuses: for bathos in Miss Lessing's case and for the attempted apotheosis of immaturity in Mr. Hope's.

Dr. Daly is assistant professor of French at the University of Notre Dame.

Both stories are recounted in the narcissistic manner that passes among the literati these days for "talented" and "scintillating." This is particularly true of *A Separate Development,* the slick

tone of which is simultaneously reminiscent of John Irving's *The World According to Garp* and New York cocktail-party *Gespräch.* The problems that come to light in Lessing's and Hope's novels are not, however, just literary—they are political, as well. In both books there is an evasion of individual and societal responsibility. Miss Lessing's protagonist, Doeg the Memory-maker, is delivered from the necessity of defining himself in relation to his society via a synthetic mysticism which allows each individual to become another and to join after death in the "dance and flow" of the universe. This transformation is portrayed in snatches of broken, dreamlike conversations which never really resolve anything. In addition, the delineation between appearances and reality is blurred in the transcendent cosmic unity which is proposed by Miss Lessing as a conclusion. Eventually, neither novel is the evolution suggested by the title. The inconclusive depiction of the hero's transformation, and finally the absence of verisimilitude are especially disturbing lacunae since they are the very subjects which supposedly provide Miss Lessing's philosophical groundwork.

Mr. Hope's novel, like Miss Lessing's, waffles. He slickly solves the problem of his protagonist's identity by stating that the latter is unclassifiable. Although his novel is supposedly a serious political attack on apartheid in South Africa, the transformation of the so-called hero, Harry Moto, is confined to a series of highly improbable adolescent adventures. The psychic or intellectual effects of Moto's experiences are, at best, only referred to elliptically. Mr. Hope means Harry Moto to be the likable victim in a satire against the horrors—both petty and gigantic—of the South African social and political system, but Moto emerges as merely a youthful manifestation of adolescent bigotry, ignorance, superficiality, and prurience. It seems poor judgment to attempt to criticize the failings of the adult world through a character who epitomizes all the puny vices of youth.

Despite these basic flaws, *The Making of the Representative for Planet 8* and *A Separate Development* do have some redeeming qualities. Miss Lessing does ask some provocative philosophical questions, and her prose occasionally shares the clarity of the ice and snow which abound in her work. Mr. Hope displays an eye for the preposterous and exploits it deftly. In its good moments, *A Separate Development* can be compared with such classics as Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man.* The weaknesses and strengths of Hope's and Lessing's novels become more evident when one analyzes their plots more closely.

Miss Lessing's novel is a science-fiction account of the demise of Planet 8—a once beautiful, fertile world inhabited by a civilized peace-loving people

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who live in harmony under benevolent rulers. But an ice age is threatening the inhabitants and their planet with extinction. At first, the people believe that the immense black wall which Canopus, their rulers, had instructed them to build, will protect them from the encroaching glaciers. Later, this hope abandoned, they await their promised removal to the clement planet, Rohanda, only to discover that it, too, is being destroyed by ice.

The Making of the Representative for Planet 8 narrates the inward journey, literally and figuratively, of the courageous, nature-loving inhabitants of Planet 8 who must learn to live in cramped, fetid ice caves, to swaddle themselves in animal pelts for protection against the cold, and to eat dried meat and tasteless algae to stave off starvation. These trials of fortitude, wit, and sinew, coupled with the knowledge of their ineluctable fate, provide Miss Lessing's novel with a certain grandeur in keeping with the kinds of questions that the last representatives of the planet consider: What is the substance of thought? Where do thoughts come from? How are they formed? What is memory? Where is it located? Why can one never describe the atmosphere of a dream?

It is a tribute to Miss Lessing that she should pose such questions in a work of fiction, but it is a shame that she is not able to use them effectively. Her plot is composed almost exclusively of inquiry and introspection, but on such a cosmic scale and in such vague, tenuous language that it loses any personal impact. As the planet is devastated by brutal winds, massing ice, and body-killing, mind-numbing cold, the sterility which follows somehow infiltrates the pages of her text, robbing her characters of the very spark of life and tenacity of mind that she is trying to portray.

The daunting metaphysical questions raised by Miss Lessing find no place in *A Separate Development.* In fact, quite the contrary is true: Hope's interest focuses almost exclusively on a study of appearances and exteriors. Obviously, in a book about the coming of age of a young man in South Africa, exteriors have an inordinate importance, but the barbarity of South African racial prejudice can be properly shown only by concentrating on interior developments —of mind, emotions, and spirit. It is impossible to shake the feeling that this author wrote with one eye on the critics and the other on the typewriter: the first line concerns the protagonist's exposing himself. With a flourish of Hope's pen, a flat-footed, kinky-haired, slightly breasted, questionably complexioned youth, the "hero," has been elevated via language's post-Structuralist belief in itself as an absolute to the status of the literary symbol.

Mr. Hope ostensibly deplores the treatment of black and colored humanity in South Africa, but he treats women either as hysterical females or, more frequently, as sexual service stations. Just as the protagonist runs away after being discovered in a compromising situation with his date for the graduation dance, the author runs away from the crucial questions concerning the effects of hatred, violence, and fear. □

Explorations of the National Psyche

Anthony P. Dunbar: *Against the Grain: Southern Radicals and Prophets 1929–1959;* University Press of Virginia; Charlottesville.

Richard Reeves: *American Journey: Traveling With Tocqueville in Search of Democracy in America;* Simon & Schuster; New York.

by Charles A. Moser

Each of these books treats an important facet of the American experience which has helped to define our national character: *Against the Grain* deals with Southern Agrarian radicalism, with emphasis upon the ideological decade of the 1930's; *American Journey* deals, in a broader and more haphazard fashion, with the general nature of the American polity today, 150 years after Tocqueville's visit to this country. The two books are organized quite differently. Mr. Dunbar, Southern Field Secretary for Amnesty International, has written a detailed historical account of a social movement centered on a limited number of individuals and organizations, on the basis of records kept by some of them—especially Howard Kester, Secretary of the Fellowship of Reconciliation from 1926 to 1934, and the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union, which reached its zenith in the mid-1930's. Mr. Reeves is a professional writer from New York who decided to retrace Tocqueville's steps as a means of "updating" the latter's observations on American democracy. In the abstract Reeves's idea is a good one, but in practice—given the vast social changes that have occurred in the interim—the scheme has limited usefulness. Reeves emerges with a collage of quotations from Tocqueville as well as his travel notes; with the opinions of present-day community leaders (mostly liberal in persuasion) who just happen to live in some of the places Tocqueville visited; with miscellaneous scraps which he considers characteristic for some reason; and with his own conclusions on various matters. There is, however, a similarity between the Dunbar and Reeves books: both suffer from a tendency to get lost in detail.

Against the Grain is the story of a group of idealistic young men and women who, for the most part, began as Christians but adopted a political pro-

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gram drawn primarily from Norman Thomas's Socialist Party platform, with some infusions of communist doctrine. They promoted economic and social justice in a very agrarian and conservative part of the country, where men often reacted violently to challenges to the economic and racial order. The alliance between radical Christianity and socialism has continuing relevance even today, when peasant-based underdeveloped societies are threatened by that same alliance. Howard Kester, to be sure, never formed such a linkage entirely. Even at that time he realized that the communists were simply seeking to manipulate Southern racial tensions for their own purposes, and his experiences with them in organizational politics brought him to distrust the communists quite cordially, no matter how closely his political ideals seemed to coincide with theirs. Still, Kester and many of his associates undoubtedly shared the view expressed by the theologian Harry F. Ward in *Our Economic Morality* (1929), wherein he argued that there was in capitalism "an irreconcilable antagonism to the ethic of Jesus." When Christian theologians use Christian ethics to negate the capitalist economic structure, a powerful alliance between Christians and Marxists can come into being. Indeed, around 1940 one of the most radical of the Southern Christian reformers, Claude Williams, founded the People's Institute of Applied Religion for the express purpose of bringing Southern fundamentalist Christians to a Marxist interpretation of the Bible: he presented Christ, Dunbar writes, as the "leader of an underground guerrilla movement known as 'The Way of Righteousness' which, when victorious, would usher in an age of brotherhood and plenty." In short, the members of the Southern radical movement envisioned a commonality of purpose between Christianity and communism on the ethical plane, if not on the metaphysical level. But then metaphysics no doubt counted for very little with them.

The Southern radicals also managed to synthesize opposites in their political program, which sought to apply socialist principles and the ideals of unionism —which were developed originally for the industrial proletariat—to the situation of poor Southern sharecroppers. When sharecroppers were being evicted from their homes, it was easy to persuade many of them to "strike," but the socialist principle of the abolition of private property found little enthusiasm among people whose chief desire in life was to obtain land of their own. Consequently, the program of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union called for, if not ownership, then the guaranteed use of land: one resolution passed by the organization held that "actual tillers of the soil [should] be guaranteed possession of the land, either as working farm families or co-operative associations of such farm families, so long as they occupy and use the land." Also, Agrarianism would have nationalized all farmland except for farms of fewer than 160 acres, and those managed by producers' cooperatives and by local governments in accordance with the proper principles.

It is worth noting that the main outline of this "socialist" program for an Agrarian Southern society coincided closely with the political platforms of the East European Agrarian parties, which envisioned an economy based on private family farms and cooperatives. Some of these parties actually came to power between World Wars I and II: e.g., the government of Alexander Stambolinski in Bulgaria from 1920 to 1923. Most Agrarian movements developed in total ignorance of one another. Kester and his associates seem to have known nothing about European Agrarian efforts, although they watched the Soviet "experiment" with great interest. If life were logical, one would imagine that the radical American Agrarians would have welcomed East European Agrarianism had they known of it.

As isolated as radical Agrarianism may have been in the South, it did have some powerful national supporters. Among them were Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace, Alger Hiss, also in the Agriculture Department then, and, later, Eleanor Roosevelt. After the outbreak of the Second World War, the Agrarian protest subsided; by the time of the Congressional investigations of the late 1940's and early 1950's its leaders were mere shadows of their former selves. Their ideas, however, live on.

If the angle of vision in *Against the Grain* is that of the social radicals of the 1930's (to his credit, Dunbar does not bludgeon readers with his own sympathies), the perspective of *American Journey* is that of the standard liberal of the 1980's. That perspective emerges most clearly in Reeves's inclination to see racism as the most important determinant—indeed, almost the sole determinant—of American social development. He does display a certain intellectual flexibility though, and occasionally he approaches the insight offered by Edward Banfield in *The Unheavenly City*—that the real division in society runs along

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class rather than racial lines, that middle-class blacks are quite as fearful of lower-class blacks with no stake in the system as middle-class whites are.

Although *American Journey* resembles nothing so much as a disjointed patchwork of information, it is possible to follow a few threads running through it. One such skein is the theme of responsibility, both personal and political. Any coherent society must have a locus of authority and responsibility. In a society under a limited government—the sort which Tocqueville found here—that locus will be primarily within the individual and the family, which yield only a small area of responsibility to the central government. By 1980 that sense of individual responsibility had diminished drastically. Even Reeves was a bit shocked when a girl of about 20 declared she would not fight to defend her own country even if it were invaded, for nothing was worth dying for: she accepted no patriotic responsibility. Dr. Eugene Galanter of Columbia University remarked that "the country changed profoundly when people accepted Social Security and the idea that they weren't responsible for their parents anymore." The soaring American divorce rate also signals a widespread refusal to take responsibility, first for a spouse, then for children. Throughout history there have always been those who declined family responsibilities, but until recently their number was relatively small. And finally, with the spread of the welfare culture and what one observer calls a "dirty little secret"—that "people don't like to work"—too many Americans are even declining to accept responsibility for themselves. If there is not a recovery of the ideal of responsibility expressed through a commitment to the family—to one's parents, one's spouse, one's children, and one's self—then our society will become inexorably more totalitarian as the state takes on these responsibilities, though it may continue to appear democratic.

The flight from responsibility is visible in the political sphere, as well. For example, as the old, internalized moral restraints are dissolved by the liberal culture, citizens move to protect themselves with locks, alarms, and laws, including rules and regulations imposed by security guards upon the entire population. A prominent judge admitted to Reeves that the courts "are making law . . . and there is already too much law," as can be seen in the cancerous proliferaton of lawyers in our society (according to the American Bar Association, at the end of 1978 there were almost 465,000 practicing lawyers and almost 115,000 law students in the United States, as contrasted with only 12,000 lawyers in Japan). We desperately seek to define responsibility through laws enforced by lawyers, courts, and bureaucracies as the individual's sense of responsibility erodes.

"Reeves' reporting and analysis compare well with Tocqueville's own, which is to say they are first-rate."

—*Time*

"Richard Reeves is our St. George."

—*Commonweal*

The recent emergence of the theory of "judicial supremacy" provides an illustration of the rise of political "irresponsibility" in our system. The national and state legislatures are still "responsible" to the people: elected officials may be voted out of office if they antagonize too many of their constituents. In a society riven by deep disagreements on major issues of public policy, elected officials may decline to make controversial decisions, and they may indeed be justified in refusing to act in the absence of a public consensus on certain issues. But the judicial activists do not see things that way:

> 'The power of the courts is becoming awesome because they have become the only place the public can find decision making,' said J. Vincent Aug, United States Magistrate for the Sixth Circuit of the U.S. Court of Appeals. 'You cannot get relief anymore in the executive and legislative branches. . . . Judges may not want to make those decisions, but they don't shy away from them—especially federal judges *who have life tenure*' [emphasis added].

The tradition of life tenure for judges—their absolute, almost monarchical, political irresponsibility—has greatly contributed to the social convulsions that have wracked our society in recent decades. Judges have decided that children should not pray at school; that abortion should be every woman's right; that there must be school busing for purposes of racial balance despite massive public opposition; that legislatures must allocate funds to improve penal systems. In short, the judiciary—along with the unelected and equally irresponsible Federal bureaucracy—now virtually runs our society, and it governs largely in accordance with the fashionable liberal notions to which Reeves generally adheres. To be sure, even he is occasionally troubled by the means through which his egalitarian ideals are achieved. Others—who understand the present situation more accurately than he—are deeply disturbed by the judiciary's usurpation of political power, and have proposed means of limiting the courts' authority: depriving them of certain areas of jurisdiction; imposing rules for mandatory sentencing; abolishing the custom of lifetime judicial tenure; forming organizations to focus direct public pressure upon judges. In short, the problem of the judiciary's political irresponsibility has become quite acute and must be resolved.

Fittingly, some of these problems may be alleviated in the short run through the

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very methods which the courts and the Federal bureaucracy have used to impose their policies. Reeves quotes a former deputy to New York's then-Mayor Koch as saying that our political problems really began "when money was tied to policy." And he is right. The social engineers in the Federal bureaucracy have gone from victory to victory wielding the threat of funding cutoffs. But this is a double-edged weapon: young men who refuse to meet their responsibilities to their nation by registering for the draft may discover they are ineligible for student loans and other forms of Federal funding. Such a situation may lead to desirable results: a recovery—even if artificial—of a sense of patriotic responsibility, or a restoration of an individual's financial independence when he is deprived of governmental subsidies.

Reeves is not wholly optimistic about the future of the American polity, especially when he recalls some of the more self-centered representatives of the younger generation he has met, or some of the impoverished who still persist in considerable numbers here. At one point he talks to prisoners in a penitentiary and then decides that the society inside is rather like the one outside. But that rather ideologically determined conclusion is belied by a telling detail which Reeves lets slip: of all the people to whom he spoke as he retraced Tocqueville's steps, not one wished to leave the United States. □

The Sense of Place

Robert Drake: *The Home Place;* Memphis State University Press; Memphis.

***Theodore Dreiser: American Diaries, 1902–1926;* Edited by Thomas P. Riggio; University of Pennsylvania Press; Philadelphia.**

***The Republic of Letters in America: The Correspondence of John Peale Bishop and Allen Tate;* Edited by Thomas Daniel Young and John J. Hindle; University Press of Kentucky; Lexington.**

by Curtis Stadtfeld

Few things are more important to the emotional well-being of humans than their sense of place, and few subjects are discussed so rarely. Perhaps because scholarship is normally an urban, if not always urbane, occupation; perhaps because the study of psychology grew in urban settings and was conducted by cosmopolitan scholars; perhaps because it is fashionable to praise cities as places of culture and see rural settings as the home of rubes, the topic has been virtually ignored. Nor do I mean the rural nostalgia that now and then sweeps across America in some kind of "back to the land" movement. The image of substance-dependent hippies coping with dry summers and sleet storms was amusing to country folk, just as occasional moves in old Russia by intellectuals trying to save the serfs was amusing, and probably irritating, to the serfs, who wanted mostly to be left alone by the feckless dandies from the cities.

But most of us have some imprinting from early days about a place; if we are lucky, it is of a happy home or a nice lawn or yard; of a neighborhood or a town or some kind of environment that a child can identify as happy, a scale of architecture and conviviality that reassures a child. If we are less fortunate, it may be a school playground, or some other place that arises a little later as important, but begins to be a part of some other, larger world, and so more shared, less personal. The place may be where something very special, very happy, was experienced. A lake where we swam in summers, a beach, a hill where we flew a kite, a boat that we sailed before a storm. And if none of these places happens for us, it may be a place that happens to us in later life that becomes important; an office, a bar, a battlefield. But those who are place-less are doomed to the empty lives we see in many urban centers today—youngsters filled with nothing more than the sounds of what they are told is music, their short-term ambition to find electronic stimulation in games or television, and the goal of artificial, conscious alteration seeming like something permanent. A sense of place is one of the anchors that can hold our lives fast in turbulent times, remind us that there are some things that do not erode with change. Even if the place itself falls victim to the urban renewers' wrecking tools, or is replaced with a nice profitable parking lot, the memory of it can sometimes help. I learned about that sense of place from my father, in whom it was so ingrained that he would never have recognized the absence of it. He was a farmer and, until he retired in his sixties, rarely traveled more than a few miles from the farm where he had been born and the adjoining one from which he earned his living. He knew every inch of every foot on a few hundred acres of land, and that intimate knowledge was his textbook for life. He revealed this to me without knowing it one evening. As a college student, I had discovered New York City, from Greenwich Village to St. Patrick's Cathedral, and once, for a holiday, I drove my parents there. In the evening, we were driving on the old New Jersey turnpike. "What did you think of New York, Dad?" "I don't think it will ever amount to much." "Why not?" "Too far away from everything."

A few years later, I realized what a wonderful thing it was for him to have such a sense of place. Each of these books is about that sense, in one way or another.

The Home Place is very specifically about it, with the author telling us about

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his ancestors and how and where they lived. Mr. Drake assumes that the reader is interested, although the people he writes about were not particularly interesting or novel. What is interesting is how they developed a sense of place, how they carried it among themselves without ever saying much about it, and how they handed it along to Boyd, who spent half a lifetime trying to figure out what good thing it was that had happened to him, and then tried in this book to communicate it. He talks of love and joy as the engines that drove their family happiness, and he is partly right. But other families, other settings, can provide love and joy; one can even make a case that impoverished people in an urban slum can experience love and joy. His story is worth telling because of the things it says about the sense of place. Those who already have that sense will recognize it in Boyd's book. Those who do not will recognize something as missing in their lives and may mistakenly think that if only they could have grown up in the country, or in a small town, they would have had happier childhoods and lives—and isn't the country the best place to bring up kids after all?

Not necessarily. Pre-electronic rural settings produced an essential quality of closeness mostly because people had little in the way of entertainment other than observing the neighbors. And so a sense of place was natural, and of enduring value. But other places can become Places too. It is the completeness of the surrounding that creates the Place, and that can happen anywhere.

As I sit in my study I can see half a shelf of books in this genre. Some of them are good, and some of them aren't. Doubtless Mr. Drake feels he has made a contribution to this literature, but unless someone learns something new about the importance of growing up in the country and writes about it, we need not extend this shelf much further.

The Dreiser diaries, of course, are about a man who suffered from an absence of that sense of place and spent much of his life in search of it. The result of the search was several quite good books. But this assemblage of diary entries is an academic's, not a scholar's, book. It is difficult to determine why anyone would think it helpful to gather into one binding Dreiser's usually tedious accounts of imagined illnesses, bowel movements, flirtations, and sexual adventures. A scholar, perhaps, could find some meaning and importance in all this. But in my experience, academics will read almost anything, and write it, if they are convinced that it will contribute to their tenure or promotion. I think an author is better judged by what he writes than by what he expels through various orifices.

Still another kind of searching for Place comes in poets Bishop and Tate. The title is somewhat grandiose; the book is really about a warm friendship that developed between two men, and how they nurtured it over the years. Poets interested in the craft of poetry rather than the insight it can provide might benefit from the technical discussions of these two men. Now and then, there is reference to an intriguing thought, but it is seldom pursued. What can one make, for example, of this portion of a letter from Tate to Bishop in 1931?

> I think the gesture (of politeness), and most of the Southern code, grew out of the people's relation to the land. You seem to miss this, and to judge the character from a viewpoint which has become far removed from the influence of the land code. In general I would say that our excessive politeness to women was due to the realization that they were the material medium—philosophy makes us use strange words—through which property is perpetuated, and while we had no respect for them as individuals, we had an exalted respect through them for the land.

Now *there* is a sense of place. □

LIBERAL CULTURE

Lady in a Red-Hot Mood

Ms. Pauline Kael, a sexagenarian by any objective count, emits in her *New Yorker* movie reviews propromiscuity vapors which, at best, create a rather bizarre impression. In her report on a flick called *Fast Times at Ridgemont High,* we may read:

> When the fifteen-year-old Stacy (Jennifer Jason Leigh) is worried about not knowing how to perform oral intercourse, her closest friend, the tall and knowing Linda (Phoebe Cates), a luscious specimen of Valley Girl, instructs her, and using a term they probably picked up in class, they discuss the "variables." Stacy, proceeding as if she were doing lab work . . .

One can just feel the relish oozing from Ms. Kael's pen (or being mashed in her typewriter) as she rounds up these sentences. Her verdict on the movie:

It's certainly likable . . . the movie has an open, generous tone.

Once upon a time, little old ladies used to court unconventionality by driving fast sports cars, or cursing, or helping anarchists. Ms. Kael seems more attuned to modernity—or perhaps to something more about which we would not dare to speculate. Our trouble is with the adjectives: we used to call such a disposition eccentric. Now embarrassing, or even disgusting, seems closer to the mark. □

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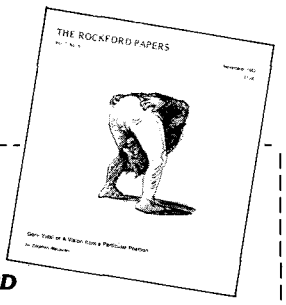

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COMMENDABLES

On Surviving Motherhood

Sanford J. Matthews and Maryann Bucknum Brinley: ***Through the Motherhood Maze;*** Doubleday; New York.

by Kathi Waite

The phrase "keep trying till you get it right" has been tossed around for many years; apparently it also applies to books: to wit, the overabundance of authors who persist in writing "bringing up baby" and, even worse, "bringing up parents" tomes. While some mothers may covet these mothering-made-easy manuals, the majority skim them with a sense of boredom, take the advice with a grain of salt, and proceed to raise their children following their own instincts rather than Dr. Spock's research. However, *Through the Motherhood Maze* is a book with some enlightening information. Its authors have chronicled a few of the cases they have dealt with in years of pediatric medicine and parental counseling. Their first principle is that when a woman achieves motherhood, she begins a career spanning a lifetime—and some are better at their "jobs" than others: there can be little quarrel with this axiom. The woman who can cope with a destructive toddler, a stubborn six-year-old, or a rebellious teenager without locking herself in a room to scream, becoming a closet alcoholic, or finding herself in near-total emotional collapse is certainly a wonder and the envy of her peers. What the authors point out—and what many women fail or refuse to recognize—is that not every woman is meant to be a full-time mother. To attempt to become the be-all and end-all to a child is, for some, self-destructive. A woman who before motherhood led an active life in a responsible job may not be able to find unconditional happiness in 24-hour mothering. The most obvious result of such a situation is a deep sense of guilt and frustration.

The authors' advice is to "survive" motherhood. The message is clear—in order to love her children a woman must also love herself. An unhappy mother is unlikely to raise happy children.

Mrs. Waite is a mother and an administrator at The Rockford Institute.

Of the Pope and Politics

Thomas Molnar: ***Politics and the State: The Catholic View;*** Franciscan Herald Press; Chicago.

Though the current visibility of prelates marching in no-nukes demonstrations and espousing "liberation theology" in leftist journals obscures the fact, it is nonetheless historically true that insofar as American politics have been affected by Christian thought, the influence has been almost exclusively that of Protestant thinkers. As a minority, American Catholics have usually been very eager to prove their Americanism to the Protestant majority but quite reluctant to make their Catholicism a consideration in public debate. The consequence, as Professor Molnar explains in his preface to *Politics and the State,* is that among the modes of American political theory now active, none includes any reference to any figure or achievement between the classical world of ancient Greece and Rome and the Renaissance. The centuries in between are peremptorily dismissed as "the 'dark ages,' unworthy of mention, let alone discussion." It is to fill this lacuna that Dr. Molnar has written his book.

One of Western man's most important distinguishing characteristics is a sense, not found among the ancients, of the transcendent as the basis for moral and religious life. Modern political scientists therefore must inevitably founder, Dr. Molnar contends, unless they take into account the role of the Church in establishing and reinforcing the perception of "the supernatural element in the makeup of man and political society." Following Aquinas, Dr. Molnar develops a view of Western politics recognizing the state as a second-order creation of God which functions properly when it orchestrates already extant institutions (not idealistic experiments) into a "Thomist balance between the democratic and the theocratic state." According to this analysis, what any Western government needs is a respected and vigorous Christian Church as its counterpoise, endowing members of society with the kind of "dual citizenship" in church and state developed during the Middle Ages. Since it is now both impossible and undesirable to revive the civil religions of antiquity with their immanent national deities and semi-divine rulers, Dr. Molnar believes that only such a church-state *balance,* not mere separation, can forestall the erosion of the morality and decency essential to any orderly society. The modern "unitary tendency" toward an increasingly monolithic and thoroughly desacrilized state, Dr. Molnar warns, will topple courthouses as well as cathedrals.

In advancing a *Catholic* understanding of politics, Dr. Molnar is not blind to faults in his Church's past and present application of that understanding. He concedes that Luther and Calvin did have legitimate reasons to object to the papal court's ecclesiastical handling of sin, and he indicts as "bad shepherds" the considerable number of contemporary Catholic priests who have abdicated their spiritual mission for the sake of trendy social causes. Nevertheless, most readers will detect the tendentiousness of Dr. Molnar's study. He faults Calvin and Luther for promoting "harsh government," but he skates insouciantly over the horrors of the Inquisition as unspecified "repressive operations" made necessary by "anarchistic, nihilistic, and utopian movements." Indeed, for anyone with a knowledge of the Church's past treatment of dissenting "heretics," Dr. Molnar's claim that Catholic political theory and practice have been "tested in the fire of changing historical configurations" verily screams with unintended irony. Moreover, his assertions that the Catholic Church itself is a model "true polity" and that "the Thomist synthesis may be regarded as a kind of summit of formal political thought, after which, and to the present day, a decline has followed" are both highly debatable propositions. But then that's precisely what Dr. Molnar wants—a place in the political debate for Catholic thought. (BC) □

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IN FOCUS

Vals & Wolfe

Tom Wolfe: *The Purple Decades: A Reader;* Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.

There is—or was, as such things are characterized by extraordinarily short duration—an epiphenomenon that began in southern California known as the "Valley Girl" syndrome. "Vals," as they're referred to, are wide-eyed creatures who may still have braces on their teeth. Although fashion sets them apart from their peers, as is the case with any social clique (e.g., preppies, punks), their language and intonation is a more pronounced differentiation. For example, should one encounter something that bothers her in the slightest—such as a pop quiz in her 9th-grade social-studies class—she'll later describe it to a cohort in the following manner: "O, man, I mean like it was r-e-a-l-l-y *gross!!!* I mean, like, it was *totally* weird-d-d, and just made me want to gag, like, o-o-o-o-o!" The Vals lead to two observations on Tom Wolfe.

1) The social critic par excellence will undoubtedly take a trip to the valley and hang out around the school lockers and at the shopping malls wearing a three-piece, double-breasted suit in a pastel shade (Val: "*Far-r-r* out!"). He will screw up his mouselike visage almost as if having sensory whiskers and listen, intensely, capturing the essence of things that are characterized as "groady" or which make one want to squeal, "Gag me with a *spoon!*" He'll carefully note how the Vals' hair hangs, the specific types of makeup and scents employed, the obviousness of the jewelry, whether brassieres are worn (though with some Vals it's hard to tell), the textures and colors of the blouses, the snugness of the trousers and skirts, the opacity of the hose, and the attitude and elevation of the footwear. He'll monitor eating habits—especially with regard to any anorectic tendencies—dance patterns, and other aspects of quotidian life. Once the data have been collected, he'll turn on his Apple Computer-like brain, process them, activate his mental Winchester disk drives, and output relevant materials via his internal Epson printer. The result will be a lively piece of deep-water journalism that will put his conservative fans in a state of awe and extort grudging praise from liberal commentators.

2) Tom Wolfe is responsible, in part, for the Valley Girls. That is, Wolfe, since his advent on the Scene, has chronicled pop culture. Many of his pages are found in *The Purple Decades: A Reader.* Almost every one of his subjects is something that has been rendered by other chroniclers of the same topics: pop-rock groups. For example, the hot rods and race-car drivers of *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* were already sung about by the Beach Boys, Jan and Dean, and others before Wolfe lighted upon them, as had been the surfers he deals with in *The Pump House Gang.* "The Girl of the Year," included in the former, which describes an underground socialite, was manifest by Nico and the Velvet Underground. One need only listen to the Grateful Dead to get the gist of *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (the group, something of a house band for Kesey and the Pranksters, does emerge in Wolfe's rendition), to say nothing of the LSD-driven wailings of Jimi Hendrix. *Radical chic* can find few better definitions than one stemming from the business side of rock music, wherein businessmen (i.e., apparently respectable executives) have been known to provide funds to performers so that they can "score" what's euphemistically called "recreational drugs." The revolutionary posturing of *Radical Chic & Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers* can be found in the lyrics of many songs current when it appeared in 1970; "Volunteers" by the Jefferson Airplane, complete with a refrain that begins "Up against the wall" etc., is a prime example. Hunter S. Thompson is a key practitioner of what's described in (and as) *The New Journalism;* Thompson first gained notice for a book on the Hell's Angels, an assemblage that has roots in the 50's rock'n'roll, and later gained fame for his pieces in *Rolling Stone.* The astronauts of *The Right Stuff* were being sung about by such diverse figures as Elton John and David Bowie (many of the former's tunes are unwittingly heard in stores and offices every day in Muzak renditions) prior to the appearance of Wolfe's best-seller. Where is the "Me Decade" more evident than in figures like Mick Jagger?

This is not to state or imply that Tom Wolfe gets all of his ideas from FM radio. But it is clear that Wolfe is attuned to many of the subfrequencies that are filtered out by most people. He seizes upon little-noticed aspects of contemporary life in America. Unlike the various before-mentioned crooners and wailers, Wolfe doesn't simply sing a paean to them, but provides an assessment in the context of values that are more profound and enduring than those which culminate in gold records.

Back to the Valley Girls. The language of the Vals is very reminiscent of the prose style in the early Wolfe. It is almost as if the Vals were assigned one of his books in their 9th-grade social-studies class (Wolfe's books *are* being assigned) and it has served as the basis for a cargo cult. Even if that's not the case, Wolfe's extremely popular studies of American subculture have led to the recognition of such by publishers, advertisers, and merchandisers who seize upon budding fads and capitalize on them (e.g., Pac-Man was once a video game; it is now a way of life with its own books, TV shows, clothing, car ornaments, food, etc.). Wolfe, more than any other on the Scene, has made the ephemeral too attractive. □

Fighting the New York Stage Managers

A.L. Lazarus and Victor H. Jones: *Beyond 'Graustark': George Barr McCutcheon—Playwright Discovered;* Kennikat Press; Port Washington, NY.

"I have often thought," wrote Samuel Johnson, "that there has rarely passed a life of which a judicious and faithful narrative would not be useful." George Barr McCutcheon appears as a negligibly unimportant figure in most standard literary and cultural histories, memorable only for best-selling but artistically trivial works such

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as the edelweiss romance *Graustark* (1901) and the farcical *Brewster's Millions* (1902); nevertheless, the biography A.L. Lazarus and Victor H. Jones have written about him lends some substance to the Great Cham's general observation. The man Lazarus and Jones portray was, like the minor poets Dr. Johnson treated in his *Lives,* merely one of those "writers of minor but creditable achievement," but his life story reveals a surprisingly complex man. After a number of early failures, McCutcheon discovered that he could win popular success by indulging in romantic idealism, but he hated himself for doing it and therefore doggedly persisted in expressing ironic humor and satirical realism in plays which Lazarus and Jones find comparable in many ways to those of O'Neill and Ibsen. Unfortunately, because he "alienated himself from . . . that fashionable coterie, whose literary and political criticism in such magazines as the *Nation,* the *New Republic,* and *New Masses* became the dernier cri of the New York intellectuals," he could never find an audience for his plays nor win a serious critical response to his more careful fiction. Although this study appears to be the kind of "judicious and faithful narrative" Dr. Johnson called for, it probably will not appreciably affect the accepted image of McCutcheon as a Hoosier yokel who wrote potboilers. For that depiction still has the approval of a contemporary Manhattan elite whose reign over cultural concerns is so literally pickled that its stale vapors forced Messrs. Lazarus and Jones to look for a publisher in Port Washington. (BC)

WASTE OF MONEY

Anesthetic Thought in Action

Patricia Geary: ***Living in Ether;***
Harper & Row; New York.

Doris Betts: ***Heading West;***
Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

by Allen Brodsky

Why read fiction? The primary impulse for most readers is their desire to be entertained: to be made to laugh or cry, or to be transported in imagination to exotic places and times. Another reason is to have one's prejudices reinforced: high-minded people read books about refined society; bored housewives read about racy worlds they know must exist. These novels fall somewhere in between. Patricia Geary's *Living in Ether* and *Heading West* by Doris Betts (whose previous book was a National Book Award finalist in 1974) are attempts at literature. The two books are unexceptional artistically, but worth attending to because they and their jacket advertising reveal a certain unhappy attitude shared by many writers and readers. Both books have the same plot: a woman, dissatisfied with her lot in life, does little to improve it, and accidentally finds herself involved with a man who causes a change in her way of life.

Mr. Brodsky is a teaching graduate student at Temple University.

The protagonist of *Living in Ether* is young, single, and lives in Hollywood. She earns her living as a medium, and she finds herself sexually attracted to a male client who wants to contact the spirit of Yukio Mishima. The man seduces and abuses her; she doesn't resist. She abandons spiritualism and yoga for a life in which she practices karate and Buddhism with the Mishima fan, her new lover. The protagonist of *Heading West* is a 34-year-old single woman with the instincts of an adolescent who finds her life in the South oppressive. A conscienceless, odd young man abducts her. She does not resist the abduction, and, as a consequence, meets and falls in love with an ordinary man who lives in the West. Both protagonists are aimless, self-centered, and ineffectual.

The dust-jacket copy of *Heading West* says, in part, that the novel:

> takes us into the life of a bright, spiky, vital woman in her thirties, fleeing the murderous boredom of her spinster life—and into her deepening and mysterious complicity with the unbalanced stranger who kidnapped her . . . [S]he comes to realize that, beneath her terror, she is engaged in some kind of strange, silent collaboration with her abductor. . . . [S]he both confronts her truest self and encounters the agents of her unforeseen and miraculous destiny.

Apparently, the publishers assume that readers are interested in a character whose life is "murderously boring," who, instead of fighting an unpleasant and potentially fatal turn of events, collaborates with it, and whose "destiny" is completely controlled by unknown "agents." Such a woman is hardly a human being; she reminds one more of a stray bit of spaghetti bobbing about in a pot of boiling water. But obviously she appeals to many of the people who write, edit, publish, and read.

Novels should tell stories about being human and having goals in life. Drifting leaves on a river, or rocks sinking through a lake, are not literary characters. Books about them do not entertain, do not instruct, do not divert; they chill, for they reveal the void that publishers publish and which reviewers acknowledge as novels. □

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Politics & Culture

Moser: Comment; Congdon on Isserman and Barrett *(Which Side Were You On?, The Truants);* Vasilash on Dillard and Edel *(Living by Fiction, Stuff of Sleep and Dreams);* Caiazza on Wills, Davidson and Lytle, Kersaudy *(The Kennedy Imprisonment, After the Fact, Churchill and de Gaulle);* C. Daly on Thurber and Weeks, Carpenter and Tolkien *(Selected Letters of James Thurber, The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien);* Francis on Crozier and Herman *(The Minimum State, The Real Terror Network);* Carlson on Baum *(The Holocaust and the German Elite);* Tanner on Hawkes and Adams *(Virginie, To See You Again);* Hawkins on Summers *(On Strategy);* Christensen on Sommer and Barron *(Last Resort, Groundrush);* Montgomery on Davis and Reed *(Hometown, One South);* Walsh on Piercy, Atwood, and Stade *(Braided Lives, Bodily Harm, Confessions of a Ladykiller);* Clemens on Fishwick, Leary, and Smith *(Common Culture and the Great Tradition, Changing My Mind, Among Others, The Real Marijuana Danger);* Commendables; In Focus; Perceptibles; Waste of Money; Screen; Art; The American Proscenium; Liberal Culture; Journalism.

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SCREEN

Facing Fascism

Hans-Jürgen Syberberg: *Hitler, A Film from Germany;* Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.

by Stephen Macaulay

Hans-Jürgen Syberberg is a filmmaker who was born in Germany (Pomerania) in 1935. In the history of film, post-World War I German productions are highly rated. Lang, Murnau, and Pabst, *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari, The Last Laugh,* and *The Joyless Street:* all are names that stem from the 20's. Two years before Syberberg's birth, the German film industry fell under Hitler's dominion. A period of barren fascist craft followed. Post-World War II films, until recent years, are not particularly noteworthy. In Syberberg's words about modern filmmaking in Germany (which can apply equally well to Hollywood, which Syberberg sees as a cause for the change): "Today's movie-house has, in my opinion, been the locus of a deteriorated form of Aristotelian dramaturgy—deteriorated into boulevard triviality—for the past fifty years, without poetic, aesthetic, or intellectual innovation." In the rare cases when such innovation does come to the fore, it remains isolated, without true successors, with perhaps only poor imitators. *Hitler, A Film from Germany* is Syberberg's successful attempt to reclaim film from the mentality that views film—what Susan Sontag calls "*the* art of the twentieth century" in her preface to the text of the work—as "the fast-food stand of show business."

The film is what Syberberg calls a *Trauerarbeit,* a "work of mourning," and as such it is discomforting: the working out of any pain requires it. While the reader of the text is spared sitting over a seven-hour period and the viewing of shocking images that proceed unabated, he or she is also forced to reflect on the words and images. The meditation occurs midsentence or during other breaks from reading; the film-viewer cannot stop or go back, only move ahead. Both come away changed.

Many films have been made about Hitler; men from Charlie Chaplin to Alec Guinness have played the role. But Syberberg's creation is not merely a film about Hitler. Rather, it is the performance of a tragedy, one with the purpose of forcing the German people to come to grips with a period in its past and so to become purged. Certainly Syberberg knows that his countrymen are aware of the horrible numbers of Auschwitz and the other camps; he, as they, are aware of the arguments that Hitler was simply the tool of the rapacious capitalists. But such recognitions and others like them are rational or material concepts, and, says Syberberg, "Hitler is to be fought, not with the statistics of Auschwitz or with sociological analyses of the Nazi economy, but with Richard Wagner and Mozart. . . . Hitler and all the idealism of his misled followers can be conquered only with the heart." He contends that the German people have become thoroughgoing materialists since the war, which has made them comfortable yet culturally deficient. Their emphasis, he thinks, is not just born of necessity, of the need to rebuild, but rather a reaction against Romanticism, of which Hitler is mistakenly seen as the apotheosis. Syberberg asserts:

> In the course of assiduous lessons in rationalism and materialism, they repressed one of their most important traditions, the accursed main strand of their nature, pinning it all on the Nazis without a demurrer, putting the curse of Fascism upon the long history of irrationalism and what relates to it. Hence everything that is mysticism, *Sturm und Drang,* large portions of classicism, the Romantic period, Nietzsche, Wagner, and Expressionism, and their music and parts of the best things they had, were surrendered, relocated, repressed.

Some of "the best things" are, undoubtedly, pre-Hitler films. Syberberg thinks it is too much to give up, especially as, if the horror is faced with the heart and the head, it will be seen as unnecessary, a ruse, something hiding a wound. □

MUSIC

Struttin' with Some Ideas

Gary Giddins: *Riding on a Blue Note;* Oxford University Press; New York.

by Douglas A. Ramsey

Gary Giddins's range is impressive. He is of a generation of jazz critics and reviewers reared in the age of rock, most of whose lack of perspective has resulted in some of the most wrongheaded evaluations since the know-nothing apologists of the Dixieland revival of the 1940's.

Mr. Ramsey is a jazz musicologist in San Francisco.

The pages of *Down Beat* are awash in these writers' obeisances to the watery deposits of the fusion movement. But Giddins, Robert Palmer, and Peter Keepnews—almost alone among jazz writers of the rock generation—have rounded themselves into first-rate generalists. Of the three, Giddins is the most compendious in his knowledge. Few, if any, other jazz critics have even listened seriously to The Dominoes, much less traced the performance genealogies of the group's members to such unexpected influences as Eddie Cantor and Al Jolson. His consideration of the question of Bing

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Crosby's minstrel heritage is intriguing, and he is illuminating on the similarities and differences in the piano styles of Jelly Roll Morton and Professor Longhair. His comments on the symbiotic relationship between Jewish songwriters and black jazz musicians in the first half of this century are thought-provoking.

"The blue note is endemic in jazz, blues, and gospel," he writes, "and has settled in every corner of American music, from Tin Pan Alley to Nashville and from symphonies to New Wave rock. Yet it is invisible in Western musicology; a microtone—a wavering pitch between, say, a third and a flat third—can't be notated." So, using the title of Duke Ellington's "Riding on a Blue Note" as the umbrella for this collection of reviews and essays, Giddins finds the "illusory blue note" linking such disparate artists as Elvis Presley, Cecil Taylor, Bing Crosby, Sonny Rollins, Ethel Waters, and Dutch modernist Willem Breuker. Along the way he offers useful insights: in the chapter on the singer Bobby Blue Bland, for instance, we find Giddins's perception of the difference between expectations of the jazz audience (progress and innovation) and the hunger of the jazz audience (satisfaction of the tradition), and of why Bland is a champion at delivering what blues fans want:

> He is not an intuitive singer, but a master at employing a cache of techniques for the optimum expression of a song's lyrics. . . . he does not take overt chances; to do so might imply that his mastery of the tried and true is less than sufficient.

Giddins is convincing in his explanation of why the music of the iconoclastic Ornette Coleman can be effectively interpreted by other players and why that of the more tradition-oriented Charles Mingus has not been. He is less convincing when he introduces into his jazz pantheon Betty Carter, a singer whose abilities have been obscured in a cloud of mannerisms. And he is occasionally just wrong in some of his assessments. To call the self-renewing and unclassifiable pianist Don Ewell a "thumping stride tickler with few original ideas" evinces his unfamiliarity with the artist's work or, worse, closed-mindedness. There are times when Giddens assumes too much knowledge on the part of the reader, as when he describes Frank Sinatra's style as including "Dorsey-like vowels" and fails to mention that Charlie Parker's instrument was the alto saxophone. But his evaluation of the contradictions in Sinatra is perfect: "it's difficult to listen to the singer without hearing the clatter of the man," and his Parker scholarship is based in creative listening. Giddins has discovered that Parker's celebrated opening phrases in his "Embraceable You" solo are a quote from a deservedly obscure 1930's pop song, "A Table In The Corner." And he claims correctly that the quote is an example of Parker's genius for transcending and improving his musical raw materials. He properly excoriates Warner Brothers Records for ignorance and carelessness in including the wrong takes of several Parker performances in its supposedly definitive reissue of his best work from the old Dial label. He raises penetrating and important questions about the music industry, particularly its commercialization of the brilliant guitarist Wes Montgomery, who became a financial success by using a highly stylized but minor part of his talent.

Giddins sometimes falls short in attempting to match words to his ideas and fails—like most prose writers—to approximate in words the sounds of music, as in this effort to catch the essence of a trumpet style: "The best of the teasers was Harry Edison, whose solos came in three basic flavors: beep beep beep, beep beeeep beep, and b'beem'm b'beep." But he often succeeds in evoking the music: "[Trombonist Jack] Teagarden's lazy time, the casual triplets percolating unexpectedly from his warming Texas blues riffs . . ." Passages like that demonstrate his "professional fan's" appreciation of excellence. His tough review of portions of the 1979 Kool Jazz Festival in New York reveals him as a discerning, occasionally acidulous critic: "[Mel Torme's] arrangement on 'Blues In The Night' was the inspired idea of a mediocre musician—it changed tempo and style every eight measures, and was as arty as designer clothes." "Over the cheering, she finishes the song by sobbing the refrain, an extremely uncharacteristic aesthetic mistake. [Sarah] Vaughan is no more an actress than Joan Sutherland, and her crying is not only musically inept but false to the lyric's irony and her own message of strength." And Giddins has a flair for physical description; on violinist Joe Venuti, for example: "Venuti was built like a cement mixer. When at rest, his jowls were crepe-paper hangings, and his mouth folded into a quizzical, placid smile. When he laughed he roared, and he talked like an extortionist." In fact, Giddins's style is most engaging in his essays and sketches on individual artists. He is spellbinding in his recounting of the adventures of Charlie Parker's old sidekick—society bandleader, con artist, and born-again trumpeter Red Rodney. In his portrait of the late saxophonist Art Pepper he treats the sociology, mythology, and political

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double binds that sustain and entangle the white jazz musician. The chapter on Dexter Gordon incorporates a brief history of the saxophone in modern jazz and transmits some of the frustration of a major American artist who finds more acceptance abroad than at home.

While Giddins has a vision that allows him to place music in societal and political perspective, he has refrained from polemicizing from racial or political viewpoints when he writes about jazz. He stakes out a huge territory, virtually all important American popular music that has developed from blues and jazz roots. This book is a fragmentary approach to the subject, an indication that Giddins may be the one eventually to provide a major study of the field. In the meantime his enthusiasm, intelligence, and ability to entertain in *Riding on a Blue Note* stimulate the desire to hear and appreciate the music. No small accomplishment, that. □

THE AMERICAN PROSCENIUM

The Bombing Season & the News

Bombs were exploding during the past holiday season with the cheerful frequency of Christmas cards arriving in the mailbox. Each time—whether in Lebanon or Northern Ireland or somewhere else—people innocent by any reasonable measurement met an unexpected, senseless death, that is, the cruelest of destinies, meted out to them by the vilest monster our century has spawned—the political terrorist, the creature with the most repulsive moral motivation humans have encountered on this planet since the time of dragons. The heinousness of the terrorist's impulses is compounded by the effective and beneficial alliance he has succeeded in forging: the cooperation of the liberal media establishment that preys on his exploits and lavishly feeds him by profitably selling his mayhem as their news. Of course, in order to ply this trade on a national scale, the media need some sociomoral absolution: thus the terrorist is whitewashed with tricky, kinky, duplicitous interpretations, and the media's voraciousness for bloody sensationalism is presented as mission and humble service to the people in order to fulfill their constitutional right to know.

As always, it worked this way in the tragicomic episode of the demented zealot and antinuclear "activist" who threatened to blow up the Washington Monument in order to enforce *his* view of how the possibility of atomic war should be handled according to *his* demands. The man was duly killed by police, regardless of his ability to carry out his threats, and CBS fielded Mr. Bill Moyers to tell the nation what in this unseemly happening was right and wrong.

A few words about Mr. Moyers. He is CBS's new silver-tongued conscience, and one must say—he is great. He has invented a surefire formula of interpretative impact that the liberal media have been dreaming of for decades. He has a Texas-gothic face and dresses very well. He has the manner of a demi-intellectual, which he is, and he oozes the Elmer Gantry-like concern for compassion and humanity with the efficiency of a Southern Baptist and with an unmatched, exquisite hypocrisy marketed as noble, humane consideration. It is liberal hypocrisy—which, of course, one cannot question, at least not on the CBS news, and so Mr. Moyers is free to employ a new dialectics of mass-oriented, shallow "decency" as a catchall for infallible TV publicistics. He is a markedly nice man who embraces the nicest causes, takes the nicest stands on them, and no one can reproach him for any rational or moral trespass—first and foremost because CBS would never allow it to happen, would never permit anyone to prove how wrong such a darling person may be. He thus has a free ride for his opinions, inferences, and manipulations of fact, truth, and analysis—thereby embodying what the liberal culture is all about. Occasionally, an observant viewer can glimpse a contemptuous rabidity in the curvature of his lips.

On the Washington Monument hapless-bomber incident Mr. Moyers passed a judgment to the effect that the man should be respected somehow, for he acted out of despair in order to make the superpowers more cautious. The commentator thus discussed the central question of the interrelationship between representative democracy and civil disobedience that has plagued America since its inception. The sociopolitical framework devised and bequeathed to us by the 18th-century conceptualists made clear, valid, and obligatory the notion that the ballot is the only way to voice postulates, register discontent, reward justness, punish wrongheadedness, redress grievances. The process may be flawed, slow, ineffectual, prone to perversion and corruption, but a better one has yet to be invented, and other propositions from the totalitarian left or right have all proved to be simply disastrous. If Mr. Moyers knows what to replace representative democracy with, in order to free people from "despair," he should say so. We doubt that he knows, but we're positive that his middlebrow tinkering with pseudo-sophisticated and quasi-compassionate rhetoric does not enhance any civilizational value in our current social ethos; it only polishes the modish, media-nurtured "esteem" for terrorists, bombers, political thugs, all tagged as subjects of "despair."

As to cautiousness of governments in dealing with the nuclear dilemma, it would be fair to say that since Hiroshima and Nagasaki more people have perished from the acts of terror against possible use of the A-bomb than from the weapon itself, and that trying to enforce

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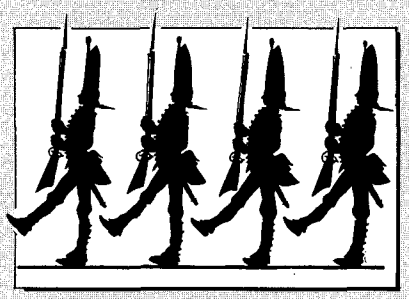
LIBERAL CULTURE



The Clear and Present Danger

Prior to his death one week before Brezhnev's, left-wing historian E.H. Carr warned his fellow Westerners against what he perceived as a perilous tendency in our attitude towards the Soviet Union:

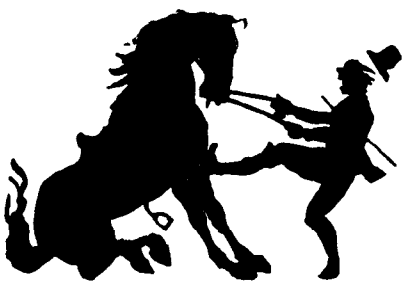
> The danger is not that we shall draw a veil over the enormous blots on the record of the [Soviet] Revolution, over its cost in human suffering, over the crimes committed in its name. The danger is that we shall be tempted to forget altogether, and to pass over in silence, its immense achievements. . . . I am thinking of the transformation since 1917 in the lives of ordinary people. . . . Soviet society is still advancing.

Mr. Carr addressed the wrong audience. Those most lacking in appreciation for Soviet accomplishments are not Western Europeans and Americans but rather millions of Hungarians, Czechs, Poles, Ukranians, Russian Jews, Afghans, and Southeast Asians. Mr. Carr's tender hope that Soviet society is "still advancing" means panic in Warsaw, Kabul, and Prague. □

"caution" upon the U.S. government without any shred of possibility of even asking the Soviet Union for the same amounts to simple political swindle. But, as we have mentioned, Mr. Moyers and his friends at CBS news are demi-intellectuals in search of untrammeled power over minds, thus any fundamental fairness of thinking, the *conditio sine qua non* of intellectual decency, is beyond the scope of their comprehension.

Word Mincing

In maintaining that the profreeze movement in America is manipulated by foreign interests' advocates, Mr. Reagan minces words. Anyone in America who actively supports what the Soviets find conducive to their interests is, to our mind, an objective tool of Soviet global policies. This statement requires no empirical evidence (secret agents, clandestine payments, illicit visits of profreeze activists through the back doors of Soviet consulates, etc.). All that is needed is our power to reason logically, to employ the same sort of thinking used in algebraic or geometric exercises. The freeze postulate is part of a comprehensive Soviet geopolitical strategy: it gives the Soviets a legally negotiated halt to the American armament process, fully verifiable in America because of the nature of our society (freedom of inquiry, competing political organisms, informative media unbounded by any restraining mechanism or principle), and quite *un*verifiable in the Soviet Union because of the nature of their society (no need to explain why). The prospective limitation is thus perfectly enforceable in America and totally unenforceable in Russia. The consequences of such a deal, taking into account the record of Soviet lies, abuses, deceptions, and violations of any mutually concluded treaty with anyone throughout history, are understandable even to a mind untrained in political finesse.



If the Poles take to the streets and demand freedom they are, to Americans, oppressed slaves crying out for independence. But to an orthodox Soviet patriot they are CIA agents, or hit men who are performing dirty work for American imperialists. And he is right, in some respects, for the Poles' eventual prevalence would mean the diminishment of the communist yoke that is, to the Soviet mind, a blessing to anyone on whom it is inflicted. The same principle applies to the naive, misinformed, overemotional demonstrator in New York or Washington honestly concerned about the horrors of an atomic war. By turning against his own government, he helps the adversary government—whatever his motivation, impulse, or the purity of his instincts. He is a tool. There are many pro-Soviet ideologues in America who have never seen a KGB agent but who firmly believe that only by supporting the Soviet might will the American might be prevented from inflicting evil upon the world at large—and those people take full advantage of an American's ignorant innocence. Of course, not every dissension within a democracy benefits its foes, but a discord of which a foe can take advantage should always be considered from exactly this angle. We may disagree to our hearts' content on school prayers and busing, but we must stand united against those who wish us ill as a society. To control, criticize, demand are sacred prerogatives of a free society; to impair our own freely elected government in its attempts to put together a defense of our very existence as a free society is either foolish or malevolent. Divided we will fall, as many nations have done throughout history—which wouldn't be considered an ultimate catastrophe by many leaders of the profreeze movement, to judge by their utterances in word and print. □

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Letter from New York: The Merit and The Glory

by Thomas Molnar

The Manhattan intelligentsia found its literary Fidel Castro when Gabriel Garcia Márquez was awarded the Nobel Prize. The New York critics noted with unconcealed satisfaction that in Garcia Márquez they have a giant of the novel *and* a friend of Fidel and Allende. It apparently thrills them that this prize recipient is far more likely to use his $150,000 for the founding of still another revolutionary magazine rather than for the starving children of Cambodia. Yes, great is the jubilation: not only did Garcia Márquez receive the Prize, but once again Jorge Luis Borges *did not* receive it. That undeserving scribbler had the temerity once to refer to Argentine generals as "gentlemen."

The Swedish Academy justified the award of the Nobel Prize for literature to Gabriel Garcia Márquez saying that his stories and novels "combine the real and the fantastic" and that "the poetic world he calls to life reflects the continent's conflict." Well, yes and no. Only in the eyes of its intellectual minority is South America a land of particular violence (which is always by *latifundistas* against subdued peasants). These intellectuals, most of them novelists and moviemakers, are the nth generation taking its cues from Europe's leftists, particularly French, Spanish, and Italian; such models enable them to transplant Marxism into South American forests and mountains, where it has found a new milieu and shaped a new type on the borders of reality and literature: the *guerrillero*. Indeed, Garcia Márquez has been described as a *"guerrillero* of letters," and even his bushy eyebrows have been celebrated as "rebellious."

Most of these literary *guerrilleros* are cautious enough to wage their wars from Mexico, New York, or the cafés of Paris. Julio Cortázar has become a citizen of Mitterrandia (no wonder his novels read like copies of Sartre, minus the talent). Others, Vargas Llosa or the Brazilian Machado, commute between their native country, Europe, and the U.S., everywhere enjoying a reputation for both macho exoticism *and* human-rights militancy. Of the entire generation of South American novelists, perhaps only Alejo Carpentier (Russo-French parents, Cuban birth) deserves the name of a serious fictional creator. The obsession of the jungle in his novels affects the individual soul; it is not put into political service.

Much has been made of *One Hundred Years of Solitude,* and more will be made of it now. I read it first in a Hungarian translation, with a postscript by a Ministry of Culture propagandist who claims the novel is about the psyche in struggle against Yankee imperialism. Márquez's ideology notwithstanding, it is certainly not about that. But what does it describe? The critics, all adulatory, of course, speak of a "microcosm of South American problematics," or of an exquisite summary of all themes treated by the continent's major novelists for a century. Márquez is supposed to be a world-class writer, so the question is, as with Balzac or Dostoevski: Can one read Garcia Márquez as a writer of universal themes, of the deepest in man, of paradigmatic occurrences? I grant the sui generis shape and sound of his sentences, the extraordinary but at times jarring telescoping of images, thus the kind of *disquiet* that novelists with great skill are able to suggest. Yet, what is behind the style that sustains this particular *angoisse?* There seems to be a common quasi-vacuity in South American storytelling, at times skillfully camouflaged by style. Borges, too, is such a practitioner; the exception seems to be Carpentier. In the texts of these stylists we have the impression of hearing a piano concerto. The mood is established, the sound polyphonous. Then, after pages of this score, we listen back and are struck by the relentless monotony. Even a talented essayist like Octavio Paz ultimately says very little; yet he too creates a mood, a sense of gloom and foreboding.

Professor Molnar teaches at Brooklyn College.

LIBERAL CULTURE

In Vino . . .

The December 1982 issue of *Ms.* magazine carries 19 ads for alcoholic beverages, that is, beer, wine, liqueurs, and hard liquor. One December 1982 issue of *Time* carries six ads for the same products.

Why is that? Do the booze producers and their ad agencies know something that we don't? Is an average feminist more prone to look for solace in the bottle than the average *Time* reader? If so, why? We've been told for so long that souse, sauce, and macho are inseparable, sources of horrendous oppressions, not to mention proof of destabilized psyche. Is there something wrong with this equation? □

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Such melancholy may come from the continent's bloody past—both Indian and Spanish—which penetrates the white or Creole descendants' souls with a mixture of overbearing fate and universal cruelty beneath the impassive stare of stony gods and serpentine spirits. This is also true of the genuine half of Garcia Márquez's world. Artificiality, not to say phoniness, enters when the twice-ancestral drama is filled with new content. The stage is set for cyclopean edifices looking down on sun-drenched sacrifices—but the play is about minityrants, lazy policemen, indolent populations. Somoza just isn't Oedipus Rex. Thus, that is the source of the malaise in Garcia Márquez's oeuvre: the discrepancy between the form, which penetrates under the skin, and its paltry "revolutionary" content.

Garcia Márquez claims he'll not write until Pinochet falls from power; he, it seems, can afford the luxury—he is, after all, part of the left-intellectual jet set—of banalizing his real talents as a stylist and storyteller. Nobody will hold his choice of topics against him, quite the contrary. The Nobel Prize could serve him as a warning; he will take it as an encouragement. Minus the political content that jeopardizes his talent, minus also the component of the real which receives short shift in his work, Garcia Márquez's world is extraordinary through the luxuriance of fantasy. This fantasy is less Romanesque than filmlike. The merging of entire tableaux, the vanished then reappearing characters, their slow-motion life as if seen through the glass of an aquarium, the comic which everywhere mingles with the tragic would all lend themselves well to theater or screen. In fact, while reading him, one recalls Antonin Artaud, the mad theorist of the stage whose already-clouded spirit struck sparks at the contact of Khmer dance and Aztec sun worship: the "theatre of cruelty," he called it. Garcia Márquez, the toy judge of crimes against humanity, becomes genuine when he recreates, albeit often gratuitously, the cruelty that pervades segments of his continent. He is at his best when he sticks ideology under the chair, that is, when the episodes are not transparently political, and when he allows his style to meander through inextricable jungles: one does not quite know whether the real jungle or that of man's condition. Those pages where giants, monsters, and primeval nature assume shapes and become men and women may be said to justify the Nobel committee's choice. □

Letter from Paris: Missing *La Civilisation Vibrante*

by E. Stake Salisbury

"Les civilisations sont mortelles," wrote Paul Valéry, and only a few believed him in his time. The French civilization seemed immortal, invincible. It might suffer occasional and temporary setbacks—*"la boucherie"* of the French Revolution, military or political defeats—but it kept re-emerging in all its cultural robustness unaffected by self-doubt, vigorous in custom, manner, material excellence, and refinement, powerful in its petty moral platitudes and conventions as well as in its sophisticated hypocrisies. The French bourgeois—selfish and relatively more intelligent than any burgher of the Western world—was affluent and perversely tolerant; the nation was chauvinistic but open to a kind of insincere, duplicitous, and smart-alecky pluralism which maintained, during the 19th century, the cliché that France is the motherland of *any* civilized and enlightened inhabitant of the planet. Living it up, worldliness, and elegance were still indomitably Parisian, inseparable from Frenchness.

When did it all vanish? France used to know how to rise from crushing defeats, but somehow this time it does not. Perhaps one should not lay all the diminishment at the doorstep of France: perhaps all of Europe is figuratively down on its spiritual knees, but nowhere is it so poignant (at least for me) as in France.

One passes those early 1920's official buildings decorated on the top with four heavy statues of the victors of World War I: a *Zouave,* a *marin de guerre,* a *poilu,* and a *cuirassier* (they still fielded them in 1914). They all are sculpted in the obese voluminousness of Art Deco monumentalism and they remind us that France, at that time, was still a bona fide political power which set the tone for the postwar European reality. Where did it go astray? Paris in the late 30's was imposingly clean and well ordered, the Popular Front's reign notwithstanding; it conveyed an aura of wealthy, arrogant dignity, a self-consciousness of its own preciousness. Then, everything was best in Paris: the art cinema, the bistros, the Métro, the condition of the historical landmarks, the cuisine, the luxury cars, the intellectual ferment. In today's Paris, here and there bits of that exquisite, distinguished heritage flash out from the urban thicket: the sparklingly maintained 18th-century courtyards, the *belle epoque* furnishings of some restaurants; yet one is haunted by the question: Why and when did it all go wrong?

It's not easy to answer, but the feeling that *something* has gone sour is oppressively palpable, even in the presence of the most impressive vestiges of the past. One cannot escape awe when passing the early baroque splendor of *Institut de France,* or the *Eglise de St. Sulpice:* I am always overwhelmed by the unique French symbiosis of grandeur and finesse inherent in that architectural epoch. So, as always, I entered the church: but this visit proved to be an extraordinary experience, an exercise in peculiar melancholy. The church was full of elderly people of both genders, obviously a shabby, genteel flock whose faces and clothing had known better times. It was a congregation, or sodality, meeting and the

Mr. Salisbury is a globetrotter from Winnebago County.

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crowd was unmistakably French, a legacy from a better age. They were people entrenched in some remnant of Frenchness which in itself was hard to define, but at the same time, it seemed natural that they were the bridge to the France of Clemenceau and Claudel, *Maréchal* Foch and Mistinguette, Mauriac and Chevalier. They now wore their French faces, their ribbons of *Legion d'Honneur,* their discreet nationalism like they wore their *pièces des vêtments*—carefully, in the European way, which makes plain that clothes are valuable possessions, not paraphernalia of minor pleasure as they are in America. Seeing them there, in that baroque, superbly cavernous church, gave one a sense of vanishing grandeur so clear that it was almost painful.

But—why is this? Countless historical, sociopolitical, or existential explanations can be put into tomes of scholarly or intellectual analysis. There are the joint pressures of East and West, with contemporary France right in the middle between two formidable forces: the first is that of American practical optimism and good sense, and the other is the Marxian (or post-Marxian) quest for mean, rigid doctrinary utopia. But the French version of the latter attitude—whose substance seems to be some sense of vengeance against imprecise evils—however grim and invidious versus Western civilization it may be, nevertheless does not want to give up its title to the Western brand of the good life and chintzy hedonism in its pursuit of sociomoral revanchism. It does not notice that Bernard de Clairvaux and the glories of French nationalism do not blend very well with the European sound of rock music, the *Playboy* "philosophy," feminism, and political terrorism: Sartre and his intellectual gang promised such a concoction as deliverance, but it didn't work; the sociomoral and cultural nausea that a visitor from Winnebago County can distinctly smell here seems to be an inescapable consequence. There's little hope that the post-Sartrian intellectual tone-givers—the Foucaults, Derridas, or Bartheses, as contaminated with radical blindness to sensibility as they are—will help to dispel the bad odors.

American optimism? Isn't it a trifle cocky to invoke that here, on the *rue Jacob,* replete with the most splendid accoutrements of the impotent past? We do have our share of melancholies and nostalgias these days, especially in New York City. But we also feel a compelling certitude that the ultimate struggle for the shape of Western civilization is still going on. We have our load of problems, number one of which is how to devise a compromise between genuine democracy and genuine common sense. But we are sure that the intellectual machines that belabor these problems are still buzzing—perhaps more effectively than ever. □

JOURNALISM

Neo-Theology

Not long ago the *New York Times* came up with a major theological problem: its influential editor, Mr. L.H. Gelb, prowled through the depths of his own mind and, after grave reflection, expressed doubts about whether communism should be regarded as and termed evil:

> Mr. Reagan's thinking appeared to develop along the following lines: Communism per se is evil and almost all Communist movements are controlled from Moscow. The Soviet Union is bent on world domination. Almost every serious challenge to American interests in the world is manipulated by Moscow. The Soviets cannot be trusted and seek to lull Americans into a false sense of security. It is a raw view, one that does not allow for real differences within the Kremlin about policy . . .

Even when invoking the most stringent criteria of formal logic, we can see little fault in Mr. Reagan's reasoning. History, experience, current political events, and the daily news bear him out. Moreover, evil—as word and notion—is a bit worn out; it has been made a trifle shabby by several centuries of hypocritical preaching about it, but, nevertheless, it is also a perceptual symbol of something that has accompanied mankind since its dawn. As such, it is an exclusively human idea which somehow has determined individual and common destinies from our historical beginnings to our supercomplex, modern reality. It expresses something rarely definable but often materialized—conceptual and actual in the same breath. If one were to ask people who live under communism about it, they'd answer that they have a constant, palpable recognition that they face evil, struggle with evil, are daily tormented by evil. We're sadly positive that if he were describing the Moral Majority, Mr. Gelb would have little hesitation about using the word evil as an adjective, a noun, or a curse. □

Lest We Forget

Late last year America, by constructing a monument to the fallen and honoring the living in three days of ceremonies, finally paid—belatedly and insufficiently—its debt to the tens of thousands of servicemen who fought and died in Vietnam. Though some dissatisfaction persists with the bleak and somber design of the memorial, most Vietnam vets—most Americans in general—are deeply gratified to see *some* national homage at last paid to the war dead. Not everyone is pleased, though. Alexander Cockburn querulously complained in *Village Voice* that America

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built the wrong kind of memorial:

> Let me propose another memorial, to those who refused complicity in this murderous enterprise [i.e., the Vietnam War], who attempted to sabotage it.

Considering how the sabotage wrought by pro-Bolshevik journalists of Cockburn's stripe largely succeeded in making the sacrifice of American soldiers both thankless and in vain, perhaps such a monument—properly designed and placed—would be appropriate: beneath the motto "And we helped" the names of numerous Cockburns should appear on a shaft erected above one of the many shallow mass graves of "petty capitalists" in South Vietnam. (BC) □

On Emotions

As soon as the unpredicted outburst of the nation's true feelings in front of the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial had found its way to general consciousness, the forces in the press dedicated to eradicating all rudiments of Americanism began to put up a fight. They did all they could to obscure, bemuddle, even soil the emerging picture of emotions. The old enemies were hard at work. *Time* venomously chastized President Reagan for saying that the war was a "good cause," contemptuously calling his remarks "ideological"; in the same piece, one who called it a "bad war" was, of course, a nonideological good American. *New York Times* service slighted the marching veterans by a sentence: "a memorial that inadvertently reflects the divisiveness of *their* unpopular war [emphasis added]." Left-wing publications spoke approvingly about "public indifference" to the November demonstrations, as if this callous insensitivity had not been meticulously engineered in the past by the same ones who downplayed it now. Where in *Time* or the *Times* or any network programming were the stories about all those guys who have felt for the last 10 years exactly like those now being eagerly photographed by *Time* and CBS? Assiduously serving leftist sentiment, the Establishment, "independent," "middle-of-the-road," "liberal" media still nursed the image of the veteran according to the Ellsberg-Fonda-Berrigan gospel; thus the veterans who mourned their buddies and vowed revenge must have looked so surprisingly repulsive that supercilious editorial insults were all the defense they could muster.

The ultraleft-wing press like *Village Voice* and *The Nation* chose another tactic: they immediately embarked on a retrenchment job. With their well-honed skills of disinformation, subversion, and perversion, they featured articles full of hypocrisy, of spurious compassion for the wronged veterans who paid their dues to the heartless, capitalistic society only to be forgotten, alienated, rejected, ignored, spurned. There was no mention of *The Nation*'s or *Voice*'s pro-Hanoi zealotry which was the seed of and incubator for all the spurning, reprobation, and repudiation, no mention of the marches for the Vietcong, burning of the flag, invention of such slogans as "baby killers"—as if *Nation* and *Voice* were not among those who originated and ruthlessly fostered the isolation and alienation the Vietnam veterans had to suffer. *The Nation* ran a particularly despicable article in which one Peter Marin, "a writer and a teacher," described a banquet at which the entire audience of veterans gave a rousing ovation to a speaker who urged them to "someday . . . return to Vietnam and finish the job they had started but had been forced to stop." Marin comments: "it was obviously not a sentiment most of them really shared." Here is a perfect example of the liberal intoxication with unreality, a supremely telling ideological characteristic which makes an icon out of a lie: facts, even the most eminently verifiable, do not count for Mr. Marin, and he is ready to kill and maim common sense in order to impose his antifacts on reality. He reports further about a vet who allegedly has been plagued by a gnawing feeling that "the Vietnamese people would [never] forgive him for what he did." But what did he do? He probably killed some Hanoi robots who carried "liberation" on their bayonets and who brought upon the South the worst oppression in Vietnam's history; according to the latest news from Saigon, he most likely would be considered there as a saintly hero. Mr. Marin ends on an ominous note: he wants "the intellectuals . . . [to] help them [the vets] think through their condition." What's their condition? According to Mr. Marin, it's a feeling of guilt.

What guilt? What did the vets do? What "intellectuals" does Mr. Marin have in mind to re-educate the vets? Those who did not let them win the war, who defeated them *actually*, as the Hanoi regulars could not do? Or those who, on their return home, made their

In the Mail

Slavery and British Society 1776-1846 **edited by James Walvin; Louisiana State University Press; Baton Rouge.** The repercussions of slavery on various aspects of British life are examined in a series of essays that deal with topics including public opinion, propaganda, and demographics.

Sons of the Wind: The Search for Identity in Spanish American Indian Literature **by Braulio Muñoz; Rutgers University Press; New Brunswick, NJ.** *Indigenismo*—a socioliterary movement that took place in several South and Central American countries between 1919 and 1964—and its objectives are carefully examined in this readable text.

The Labyrinth **by Reza Saberi; Exposition Press; Smithtown, NY.** A story of a young Iranian traveling around the world shows that for him freedom has less to do with ideals than with girls.

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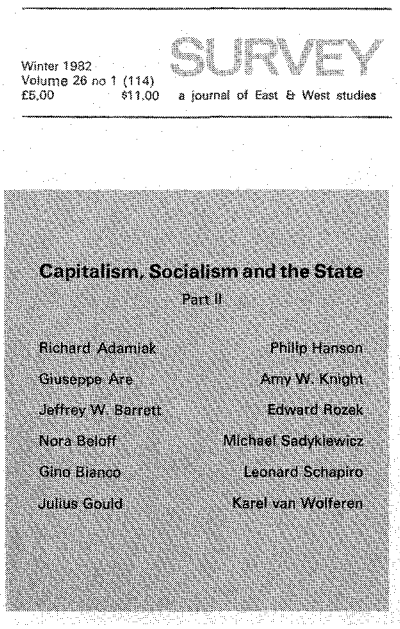

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lives hell with name-calling in print and on the movie screen? What should the vets feel guilty about? That they tried to defend a small nation, perhaps corrupt in its ancient ways, against the cruel, formidable, perfidious tyranny of international communism? Mr. Marin's pals in *The Nation* made this defense impossible, and now dislike the picture of vets swearing vengeance before the names of their pals. The outcome of the war, to the American left's pleasure, was the Soviet Union's emergence as an imperial power whose interests can be enforced in even remote parts of the globe. The American Vietnam veteran attempted to thwart this scary historical circumstance. Some people, who now say to him *Welcome Home,* did everything they could to damage his bloody efforts. In November, in Washington, D.C., his subliminal feeling that, in spite of the hysterical publicity, he may have been just, right, and noble came to a strange fruition. The Memorial's polished black marble mirrored a new sense of purpose —or perhaps one which has been rediscovered and which *The Nation's* "intellectuals" will have to swallow. □

CBS's War on Reagan

Each evening when Mr. Dan Rather of CBS News intones that Reagan this or Reagan that, a zombielike grin, perfected in decades of Hollywood horror movies, graces his lips. It indicates that, no matter what the cost, bodies will be snatched. The other day, a female CBS correspondent reporting on the President's trip to Brazil declared at the end, with that inimitable, grave, blonde dumbness, something to the effect that Mr. Reagan had sinfully skipped the visit to Rio de Janeiro's slums, where people blame their plight on U.S. economic and political nefariousness. Depressing shots of the shantytown, brimming with poverty, followed.

The idea that Reagan, and America in general, may be held responsible for the miseries of Latin American *barrios* is one of the most cherished constructs of the liberal mind—dumb blonde or zombie style. It would be interesting to learn whether Mr. Rather and his female troopers think the world would be improved by the demise of Reagan and, for that matter, the entire United States. We wouldn't bet on a negative answer. □

POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

Beechers Revisited

by Milton Rugoff

The lead "review" in the September 1982 issue of *Chronicles of Culture,* written by Clyde Wilson, professor of history at the University of South Carolina and an editor of *The Southern Partisan,* is devoted to my book *The Beechers: An American Family in the Nineteenth Century.* I put *review* in quotes because, aside from one reference to my book as a "thorough and intimate history of three generations [it actually covers two generations] . . . of a brilliant, energetic and forceful family," Dr. Wilson's essay is actually a drawn-out eulogy of General Robert E. Lee coupled with an attack on the Protestant tradition in the North and its "reformist" tendencies. The attack is based on a description of the Beecher family that is simply a tissue of distortions and inaccuracies. Almost every major point raised is based on a twisting or stacking of the facts.

For example, he declares that the Beechers "proclaimed themselves the champions of freedom and morality . . . while all the time keeping their hand in the till and their eye on the main chance." The father of the family, Lyman Beecher, a leading post-Puritan preacher of the early 19th century, was poor throughout his life, as were most of his seven sons, who were all ministers. Of his four daughters, one, Catherine, lived with relatives while she worked to establish schools for women, and another, Isabella, was an active feminist, often contributing her own funds to the cause. About the two most celebrated of Lyman's children, Harriet Beecher Stowe and Henry Ward Beecher, Dr. Wilson makes the preposterous charge that both "became wealthy because of their anti-slavery positions." The facts are that Mrs. Stowe received a pittance in royalties for *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* wrote 30 other books, only one dealing with slavery, and, as I repeatedly pointed out in my biography, lived meagerly until she published *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in her forties, and then but modestly until her death. As for Henry Ward Beecher, he was a famous preacher and earned money as a lecturer and author long before his belated involvement in the antislavery movement.

Another example: as a parallel between the "psychological weirdness" arising from "liberal politics" in the 19th century and again in the 1960's and 1970's, Dr. Wilson cites spiritualism. Of the 12 Beechers on whom I focus, four showed a mild interest in spiritualism and only one pursued it seriously. But the significant fact is that 19th-century spiritualism was a widespread belief that attracted people in all political positions and many who were totally apolitical. Curiously, as prime evidence of the Beecher interest in spiritualism, the reviewer cites the "visions" reported by Calvin Stowe, Harriet's husband. Aside from not being a Beecher, Stowe was a bookish professor of Biblical literature who had no significant political position. Moreover, his "visions" began in his childhood and were more like nightmares than spiritualist apparitions. Incidentally, Henry Ward Beecher, a "liberal" member of the family, scorned spiritualism.

As an example of what he calls "absentee moralism," Dr. Wilson asserts

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that Henry Ward Beecher, during the war that he "helped to produce," "lived in luxury in Newport and Europe." Beecher lived in Brooklyn throughout the war. He never lived in Newport. And he never lived in Europe, though he made a lecture tour there during the war, defending the North in the face of violently hostile pro-South, British audiences.

Another of the reviewer's charges is that the mock auction of young female slaves that Henry Ward Beecher staged "over and over again" in his Brooklyn church was his "favorite money-maker." Actually, he staged such auctions only a few times, and he used young female slaves simply to show how a slaveholder could buy such a woman at will. The money thus obtained was used to buy freedom for the "auctioned" slaves. I took pains in my book to point out that the auctions were sensational gestures; to imply that they were just a money-making scheme is unconscionable.

These are but a few examples of the distortions in Clyde Wilson's essay. Some Northern positions in the 19th century were certainly deplorable, but such a warping of the facts is inexcusable.

Mr. Wilson replies:

I expected my discussion of the Beechers to provoke disagreement. However, I anticipated a fruitful controversy with differently oriented conservatives over the nature of antebellum "reformers" rather than an attack from Mr. Rugoff. I did not intend a scholarly review of his book or I would have written a very different piece. I intended, rather, a cultural commentary on the subject matter of his book.

Sir Herbert Butterfield has wisely argued that the descriptive and the evaluative functions of history should be distinguished. Rugoff's book is a good descriptive account of the Beechers. That I chose the occasion of his book to react to them on an evaluative level in a way that does not please him does not make me guilty of the heinous personal and professional sins of which he has, Beecher-like, accused me. He has employed two devices that liberals have made all too familiar: the assumption that disagreement is synonymous with error or bad faith, and the shifting back and forth

between description and evaluation whenever convenient.

Mr. Rugoff's limitations as a historian are evident in his book. Whenever he attempts to rise to the evaluative level he falls back, instead, on canned concepts like "Victorianism." He accepts the Beechers entirely at their own word and in their own frame of reference. To have meaning, facts must be put in a context. My interest is not in how the Beechers saw themselves but in how others saw them—and in their impact on American society. It is true that some of them felt themselves to be poor and often said so. It is also true that they lived in genteel comfort compared to the harsh toil that was the lot of most Americans of their time. It is correct that spiritualism flourished in the 19th century. It *was* widespread, particularly among people like the Beechers and others who shared their cultural-intellectual milieu. That was exactly my point. Spiritualism was not widespread among the Southerners who were attacked by the Beechers, nor among the more orthodox Northerners whom they also often attacked. It may surprise Mr. Rugoff to learn that there are people for whom even a little dabbling in spiritualism, or a little unprovoked aggression, is weird.

In his recounting of my "inexcusable" historical "distortions," Rugoff is too literal-minded. So what if Henry Ward Beecher, the most aggressive of the Beechers, deplored spiritualism, while Stowe, who had visions, was apolitical? Differing taste or emphasis among the Beechers in choosing among their various isms is beside the point. The point is that they were the sort of people among whom a variety of such things could flourish and who appear reasonable and benevolent only because their heirs are so much worse. Surely—generalizing in a brief commentary—one can count Stowe, who was married to a Beecher, as a "Beecher" without being guilty of factual distortion? The mock slave auctions were "money-makers" not because they were profitable but because they were part of a style that was productive of profitable notoriety.

Perhaps Henry did not "live" at Newport, but he was a frequent visitor at resorts. And somehow, it is difficult to agonize over his frightful time in Europe during the bloodletting in America, when thousands of men who had far less vehement opinions than he did felt it their duty to risk their lives. His behavior seems unremarkable to us because we have become accustomed to agitators who arouse social conflict and then avoid responsibility for the consequences of it. My point was that the Beechers paved the way for our lower standards of personal responsibility. When I mentioned Henry's wartime exploits, I had in mind the contrasting example of my 16-year-old great-grandfather, who spent the winter of 1863-64 living in the open and subsisting, at times, on raw corn while fighting Federal raiding parties in North Carolina.

All the generalizations I made, allowing for avoidance of tedious qualification of each point in a brief article, were fair and accurate. The Beechers did follow and profit from a way of life that used Christianity as a vehicle to aggrandize the self by war against others. My purpose was not to eulogize Lee but to point out the common origins and style of antebellum "reformers" and modern liberals and to distinguish the different social effects of two types of Protestantism. None of Mr. Rugoff's complaints disturb the soundness of that analysis. □

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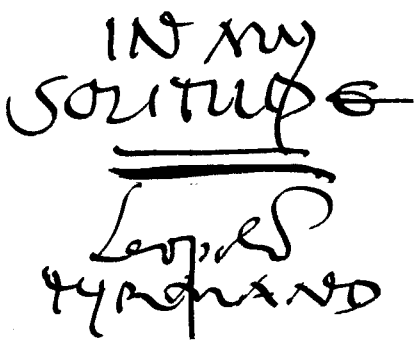
It was the autumn of our messed-up discontent, those days in November 1982, blurred as always by the arch-American ability to be right and wrong in the same breath, to embrace fervently both sides of the coin. The Vietnam Veterans' Memorial went up and was dedicated, releasing feelings of unexpected hues, convolutedness, magnitude, and enigma. Those who liked the materialization of anti-Vietnam War sentiment greeted it with mantras of articulately rabid appreciation. Those who knew how it really was there, those who had their own ideas about what *now* should be said in marble about *them,* struggled to articulate their rage. They felt they had been shortchanged—once again—yet they could not find strikingly precise words to repel the antiwar sham and cant that have been so powerfully entrenched for almost two decades in mental and cultural pressures. And actually, they were once again hoodwinked by the same peculiarly American mix of idealism and self-righteous ignorance. Vapid judgments stemming from the flat, evening-news version of the world again joined forces with the secular piety of those who have turned man's conscience into a political gadget to forge a new faith —one that announces America's defeat as humanity's salvation.

Yet, the opening had come and subsequent days brought strange things and moods, the TV screens all over America were suddenly filled with crying people. The intensity of the emotional outburst seems to have astonished both sides. People came from all across the country and stared at the bleak polished marble as if seeing in their own reflection something they had never known about themselves before—they wept inconsolably, making tears run down the face of the nation. Before that black wall—whose very erection may be perceived as an insult to transcendental fairness, which robs the listed dead of their dignity in order to rub their no-longer-existing noses in the futility of their sacrifice—people forgot outrage and redressed the wrong through purifying grief. For the first time in their lives, the slick TV network smarties showed a modicum of tactfulness: they generally refrained from comment. Besides, what was there to say? The veterans seemingly mourned their comrades who hit the dirt with them but never got up. However, underneath the sobbing of big, rugged men in their prime, in the capital of a country at peace, there was something more, hidden and weighty, too risky for comment. Mothers', fathers', and relatives' sorrow—that could be grasped; it



was the inexpressible and oppressive lament of pals which stunned the land and produced the giant lump in the collective throat and moistened so many eyes.

Can this belated outpouring of grief be credited to the correct touch of the conceptualists of the Memorial? I tend to believe it can, though for rather perverse reasons. The idea of the monument is an artistic formulation of somber and tragic waste, thus a reverent but unmistakable vision of the war's opponents. But something unintended happened: the Memorial came to parallel Archie Bunker's image in the popular consciousness. The character of Bunker was conceived as a caricature to discredit the perennial American redneck, to prove his ignoble comicality, and to suffuse American society with revulsion padded with hilarity. He eluded the designs of his creators, however, and entered the folklore pantheon as the low-level symbol of an ordinary American's inchoate but correct fears, frustrations, and alienations. As such, he turned into an unintentional affirmation of the very attitudes his conceptualists were battling.

The same fate seems to have already befallen the Vietnam monument. Its design originated in the persuasion that the Vietnam War was *so* wrong that the best metaphor for it would be a representation of the nullity of the highest offering that results from patriotic feelings, a sense of anticommunist mission, a necessity to stand up to totalitarian evil. The idea that one should serve with honor when called upon had to be dismissed, but not crudely: the more dignified and evenhanded is the projection of alleged military defeat, the more successful will be the erosion of the will to defend Western ideals against Eastern tyranny. This is why the antiwar publicists around the country prefer to see the tears flowing down the cheeks of former soldiers as their ultimate recognition of the barrenness of their bloody tribute.

I read it differently. To my mind, those tears have fertilized a new sense of patriotic commitment; they were the liquid of a final ablution, cleansing the veterans from the base, undeserved humiliations of the postwar years. Those tears signify the veterans' liberation from the demons of obloquy and self-doubt—which were skillfully injected into American hearts and minds by all the forces of the American left—from all the years of mulling over the hollowness of suffering in the name of inherited duty. Those tears may prove to be the forerunners of new moods, or of fresh thinking about how seriously an American should take his obligations toward America. Frank Barnett, no mean connoisseur of the soldier's soul, maintains that an American may fight for an idea, for his feelings about home, for the image of manhood —but, first and foremost, he fights for his buddy, the one next to him, the one who embarked on this whole dirty, smelly adventure with him. If that is true, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial—inadvertently—did more to animate the fighting spirit in America than an entire generation of the most convincing anti-Soviet politicians and orators could have done. Thus, although the lustrous mar-

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ble's respectable morbidness was supposed to reflect the triumph of those who have lost faith in America's uprightness and justness, the inspiration to fight for these values—their complexities notwithstanding—has been born anew.

I have my own opinion about what happened to the ill-fated Vietnam War in the country of one of the combatants. Many will think my view primitive, reactionary, simplified, even altogether worthless, but it is mine and I will defend it with all my rudimentary tools of cognition.

It seems to me that one inevitable sequel to historical successes is that the younger generations of affluent power elites develop a visceral longing for idealism. They yearn to rectify the wrongs, injustices, mishaps of others, to crush oppressions and exploitations of which they themselves have never been victims. Attempting various implementations of their self-righteousness, they *do* become the victims of misperceptions, the executioners of tenets of vicious and cruel utopianism, clients of inept socioeconomic schemes fabricated into moral outrages. And this is exactly what happened in America in the 1960's. Youth became divided into two segments: a large portion still abided by some sort of comfortable Americanism, perhaps just the old Hollywood brand, but their behavior was often inspired by a sense of pride and a recognition of advantages that still were clearly transmitted by American history into the quotidian life; and a smaller group which—as in 19th-century Europe—embraced moral impulse as the only panacea for all universal defects. However, the European rebellions of the progeny of the upper classes rooted their rejections in elaborate rationalities, theories, and philosophies; the heirs to the liberal tradition in America, reared in material wealth, evolved a particularly vile blend of ignorant and cynical idealism in reverse proportion to their limitless freedom and opulence. Mindless rage that trampled all conventions, authorities, and institutions of the "system" and challenged the very foundations of democracy suddenly became a quest for a better world. Better? Most of their generation did not think so, and many served in Vietnam; the society at large wanted a victory, and one liberal who ran for Congress as a peace candidate "got wiped out"—according to his own words—in New York.

Nonetheless, an unforeseen and till then unknown power had made certain that the American sedition would win. Why the media aligned themselves with the antiwar cause is hard to say. The official explanation is that they had decided the war was wrong, unjust, bad, and immoral, that it would only waste American lives. Nominally, it was a noble choice. But then the media began to impose upon the nation their own honesty with wickedly dishonest methods: the Walter Cronkite empire declared a virtual blackout on any news lending support to the war or to the anti-Hanoi cause, or giving a fair hearing to the war's supporters; at the same time, the antiwar forces were granted a ferocious visibility and vocality. The medialords were too smart not to know that many of the antiwar leaders, if honestly investigated, scrutinized, and interpreted, would prove to be malleable political marionettes of Hanoi; yet they focused all the formidable power of modern communications to transform a pygmy into a giant, a committed political activist into a paradigm of impeccable conscience, a militant into a thinker. Soon they emerged from the newspaper pages, radio broadcasts, and TV news as flawless exemplars of virtue for the entire society. Confronted constantly with the same faces and the same crowds, the same demonstrations and the same slogans, the nation became brainwashed and began to believe that the shrill minority was an emblem of the wishes of the majority. The war was lost; mankind's capacity to resist the communist cancer had been set back by decades; the Soviet Union emerged as an unassailable power, its global influence and import magnified to an extent that soon permitted it to enslave Angola, slaughter Afghanistan, and crucify Poland with total impunity. The media mavens must have expected such an outcome—they are *trained* for such projections. Why did they do it? I don't know.

All that came back to me in November. It was the autumn of our messed-up discontent. □

In the Mail

Vital Provisions **by Reynolds Price; Atheneum; New York.** Fifty poems, many of which spring from forms like that of Catullus or ideas from the Bible, indicate that poetic talent isn't necessarily learned.

Sex and Sacredness **by Christopher Derrick; Ignatius Press; San Francisco.** While this learned and lively treatise deals with two subjects that interest us greatly, we only have to wonder why *Chronicles* isn't used as a source.

The Achievement of William Styron **edited by Robert K. Morris; University of Georgia Press; Athens, GA.** What achievement?

Why Not Now? **by Mendek Rubin; Philosophical Library; New York.** A text purportedly crafted to aid the young in coping with life, its nicely illustrated pages transcend the age limitation and the often-simple verse.

Why Didn't Somebody Tell Us! **by John L. Beckley; Economics Press; Fairfield, NJ.** Economics in a form, so the dust jacket says, "which any citizen can easily understand"—in the format of a letter to a grandson.

Problems of Metaphysics and Psychology **by Jay N. Eacker; Nelson-Hall; Chicago.** Tentative approaches to defining eleven subjects—from psychology to human nature—in less than 300 pages.

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